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The Evil Demiurge

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THE HUDSON REVIEW is published quarterly by The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022. It is a member of The Council of Literary Magazines and is indexed in the Social Sciences and Humanities Index.

Subscription $5.00 per year in U. S.; foreign including Canada $5.50. Single copy $1.50. U. S. distributor: B. De Boer, 188 High Street, Nutley, N. J. 07110. Subscriptions in England: B. H. Blackwell, Ltd., The Broad Street, Oxford. Back issues and reprints of Volumes I—XVIII available from AMS Press, Inc., 56 East 13th Street, New York, N. Y. 10003.

Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. No responsibility is assumed for their loss or injury.

Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the editors.

Printed in the United States of America. Printing office: 2901 Byrdhill Road, Richmond, Virginia 23205. Second Class postage paid at Richmond, Virginia.

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VOLUME XX
NUMBER 2
SUMMER 1967

THE Hudson Review

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Notes on Contributors

E. M. CIORAN, the noted essayist, lives in Paris. Several of his essays have been published in this Review. His translator, FREDERICK BROWN, teaches French at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and is completing a biography of Jean Cocteau.

ANTHONY HECHT, GALWAY KINNELL and JEAN GARRIGUE have new books of poems coming out in the Fall:—from Atheneum, Houghton Mifflin and Macmillan, respectively.

JOSEPH WHITEHILL's novel, *Precious Little,* was recently published by Scribner's.

A collection of JOHN SIMON's film criticism, *Private Screenings,* will be published by Macmillan this October.

WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD, a new contributor, teaches English at Amherst College.

LAURENCE LIEBERMAN's next contribution to THE HUDSON REVIEW will be a review of James Dickey's poems.

ROBERT GARIS is the author of *The Dickens Theatre.*

The well-known poet and essayist, THOMAS MERTON, is a Trappist monk at the Abbey of Gethsemani, Trappist, Kentucky.

B. H. HAGGIN's *The Toscanini Musicians Knew* has recently been published by Horizon Press.

PAUL LEVINE is an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Rochester.

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ANTHONY HECHT

The Dream

The contemplation of horror is not edifying,
Neither does it strengthen the soul.
And the gentle serenity in the paintings of martyrs,
St. Lucy, bearing her eyes on a plate,
St. Cecilia, whose pipes were the pipes of plumbing
And whose music was live steam,
The gridiron tilting lightly against the sleeve of St. Lawrence,
These, and others, bewilder and shame us.
Not all among us are of their kind.
Fear of our own imperfections,
Fear learned and inherited,
Fear shapes itself in dreams
Not more fantastic than the brute fact.

It is the first Saturday in Carnival.
There, in the Corso, homesick Du Bellay.
Yesterday it was acrobats, and a play
About Venetian magnificos, and in the interval
Bull-baiting, palm-reading, juggling, but today

The race. Observe how sad he appears to be:
Thinking perhaps of Anjou, the climbing grace
Of smoke from a neighbor's chimney, of a place
Slate-roofed and kindly. The vast majesty
Of Rome is lost on him. But not the embrace

Of the lovers. See, see young harlequins bent
On stealing kisses from their columbines.
Here are the *dolces,* here the inebriate wines
Before the seemly austerities of Lent.
The couples form tight-packed, irregular lines

On each side of the mile-long, gorgeous course.
The men have whips and sticks with bunting tied
About them. Anointed Folly and his bride
Ordain Misrule. Camel and Barbary horse
Shall feel the general mirth upon their hide.

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First down the gantlet, twenty chosen asses,
Grey, Midas-eared, mild beasts receive the jeers
And clouts of the young crowd. Consort of brasses
Salutes the victor at the far end. Glasses
Are filled again, the men caress their dears,

The children shout. But who are these that stand
And shuffle shyly at the starting line?
Twenty young men, naked, except the band
Around their loins, wait for the horn's command.
Christ's Vicar chose them, and imposed his fine.

Du Bellay, poet, take no thought of them;
And yet they too are exiles, and have said
Through many generations, long since dead,
"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, . . ."
Still, others have been scourged and buffeted

And worse. Think rather, if you must,
Of Piranesian, elegaic woes,
Rome's grand declensions, that all-but-speaking dust.
Or think of the young gallants and their lust.
Or wait for the next heat, the buffaloes.

Words for the Day of Atonement

Merely to have survived is not an index of excellence,
Nor, given the way things go,
Even of low cunning.
Yet I have seen the wicked in great power,
And spreading himself like a green bay tree.
And the good as if they had never been;
Their voices are blown away on the winter wind.
And again we wander the wilderness
For our transgressions
Which are confessed in the daily papers.

Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us
A very small remnant,

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We should have been as Sodom,
We should have been like unto Gomorrah.
And to what purpose, as the darkness closes about
And the child screams in the jellied fire,
Had best be our present concern,
Here, in this wilderness of comfort
In which we dwell.
Shall we now consider
The suspicious postures of our virtue,
The deformed consequences of our love,
The painful issues of our mildest acts?
Shall we ask,
Where is there one
Mad, poor and betrayed enough to find
Forgiveness for us, saying,
"None does offend,
None, I say,
None"?

Listen, listen.
But the voices are blown away.

And yet, this light,
The work of thy fingers, . . .

The soul is thine, and the body is thy creation:
O have compassion on thy handiwork.
The soul is thine, and the body is thine:
O deal with us according to thy name.
We come before thee relying on thy name;
O deal with us according to thy name;
For the sake of the glory of thy name;
As the gracious and merciful God is thy name.
O Lord, for thy name's sake we plead,
Forgive us our sins, though they be very great.

It is winter as I write.
For miles the holy treasuries of snow
Sag the still world with white,
And all soft shapes are washed from top to toe
In pigeon-colored light.

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Tree, bush and weed maintain
Their humbled, lovely postures all day through.
And darkly in the brain
The famous ancient questions gather: Who
Fathered the fathering rain

That falleth in the wilderness
Where no man is, wherein there is no man;
To satisfy the cress,
Knotweed and moonwort? And shall scan
Our old unlawfulness?

Who shall profess to understand
The diligence and purpose of the rose ?
Yet deep as to some gland,
A promised odor, even among these snows,
Steals in like contraband.

Forgiven be the whole Congregation of the Children of Israel, and the stranger dwelling in their midst. For all the people have inadvertently sinned.

Father, I also pray
For those among us whom we know not, those
Dearest to thy grace,
The saved and saving remnant, the promised third,
Who in a later day
When we again are compassed about with foes,
Shall be for us a nail in thy holy place
There to abide according to thy word.

Neither shall the flame
Kindle upon them, nor the fire burn
A hair of them, for they
Shall be thy care when it shall come to pass,
And calling on thy name
In the hot kilns and ovens, they shall turn
To thee as it is prophesied, and say,
"He shall come down like rain upon mown grass."

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E. M. CIORAN

The Evil Demiurge

MAN, APART FROM A FEW ANOMALIES, does not have a bent for the good; what god would prompt him to it? To perform the tiniest act untainted by evil, he must overcome himself, do violence to himself. Whenever he succeeds, he provokes, he humiliates his master. And if he happens to be good not by effort or stratagem but by nature, he owes his goodness to some lapse on high, for he stands outside the cosmic scheme, he was not foreseen in any divine plan. It is difficult to understand what place he occupies among beings, if indeed he is one. Perhaps he's a ghost.

Good is what was or will be; it is what never is. A parasite of memory or of anticipation, either defunct or potential, it could not be present, nor survive on its own: so long as it is, consciousness has no awareness of it, apprehending it only after it vanishes. Everything goes to prove its unsubstantiality. It is a great, unreal force, a principle which, at the very outset, aborted: a failure, an immemorial collapse whose effects come to light with the unfolding of history. In the beginning, in that pandemonium which set the world inching toward life, something unmentionable must have occurred which, even now, pervades our malaises, if not our reasoning. How can we not presume that existence was fouled at its source, existence and the very elements? He who does not feel compelled to entertain this hypothesis at least once a day will have sleep-walked through life.

*

It is difficult, it is impossible to believe that the good god, the "Father," was implicated in the scandal of creation. Everything leads us to absolve him, to find its author in a god devoid of scruples, a tarnished god. Goodness does not create: it lacks the imagination needed to fashion a world, even a slapdash one. A mixture of goodness and wickedness may, if it comes to that, foment an act or a work. Or a universe—but ours, in any case, is far more readily traced to a suspect god than to an honorable one.

The good god was decidedly not equipped to create: he pos-

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sesses everything . . . except omnipotence. His deficiencies being the measure of his greatness (anemia and goodness go hand in hand), he is the prototype of inefficacy: he can't help anyone. . . . We cleave to him only when we have divested ourselves of our historical dimension; directly we reassume it, he becomes a stranger, he is incomprehensible—he does not fascinate us in the least, having nothing of the monster in him. So we turn to the creator, an inferior and officious god, an instigator of events. To understand how he was able to create, one must imagine him in the clutches of evil, which is innovation, and of good, which is inertia. This struggle undoubtedly proved damaging to evil: it must have emerged tainted by good, which explains why the creation could not be wholly evil.

Since evil presides over everything corruptible, everything alive that is, any attempt to prove that it encompasses less being than good, or even none at all, would be ludicrous. In point of fact, it comes close to monopolizing it: it is real, exaggeratedly so, it is the *boundless* (in the positive as well as the negative sense) since things need its mediation to go beyond their confines, flowering or going to seed. Without it, growth would be stunted, the possible abolished, eternity attained, and life reduced to a bout of fever. For life cannot be considered *healthy* unless its principle is, unless we postulate the hygiene of evil. It is evil, in any event, that by shaking the One ensconced in its identity, broke it into the bits we are; it is to evil, the artisan of individuals, that we owe vigor and style. It goads us, fortifies us, opposes any return to the unity that prevailed before fragmentation, before consciousness went astray. Good, on the other hand, by inviting us to recover the All, tries to redress the scattering, the dispersion; as nostalgia for what we were before . . . being, it is, metaphysically speaking, a thing of the past, outmoded. In loving only what confirms us as individuals, we proclaim, whether we like it or not, our gratitude to the evil god, to the dispenser of existence and author of the universal diversification. Good makes us flabby. If we cultivate it or merely find ourselves drawn to it, we lose our vigor and our spring, we abdicate our condition as creatures and, ultimately, exile ourselves from the world. People who homogenize evil and nothingness fancy this a means of *saving* the poor good god. Saving him would take the courage to separate his cause from that of the

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demiurge. Christianity, because it quailed at the idea, had to spend its entire career promoting, as best it could, the implausible notion of a merciful god: a futile enterprise which robbed it of its energy and compromised the god it sought to preserve.

We cannot help but believe that the creation, which was never more than roughed out, could not possibly have been finished, nor deserved to be, and that it is, on the whole, a *mistake;* in the light of this, man's famous breach figures as a minor version of a far graver breach. What are we guilty of? Of having followed, more or less slavishly, the creator's example. The fatality that was his we clearly recognize in ourselves: it is no coincidence that the hands that formed us belong to an unhappy and wicked god, to an accursed god.

*

Predestined as we are in our beliefs, whether we believe in the supreme but impotent god, in the demiurge, or in the devil, we do not choose what we worship or blaspheme.

The devil is the representative, the delegate of the demiurge, whose affairs he oversees here below. Despite his prestige and the dread his name evokes, he is only an administrator, an angel superintending a menial task—history.

The demiurge is far more influential: how could we face our tribulations without him? If we measured up to them, or were even faintly worthy of them, we could refrain from invoking him. But, confronted by our patent inadequacies, we cling to him, we even beg him to exist; if he turned out to be fiction, our distress or our shame would be incalculable. On whom else could we then unburden our shortcomings, our woes, ourselves? Set up, by our decree, as author of our deficiencies, he serves as the scapegoat of all we were not able to be. When, in addition, we make him bear the onus of this bungled universe, our minds are set somewhat at rest: no more uncertainty about our origins or our prospects, we feel fully secure in the insoluble, free from the nightmare of promise. He's worth his weight in gold: he even absolves us of our regrets, since he has assumed the very *initiative* for our failures.

It is far more important that we trace our vices than our virtues to the divinity. We resign ourselves to our good qualities, but

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our faults chivvy us and torment us. Being able to project them into a god capable of falling as low as we, and who is not the wan prisoner of commonly canted attributes, consoles and reassures us. There has never been a more *useful* god than the evil one. Don't we always have him near at hand to catch our flow of bile? Hatred, whatever form it takes, is ultimately aimed at him. Since we are persuaded that our merits are unrecognized or spurned, we cannot believe that such widespread iniquity is man's doing alone. It must have a higher source, it must be mixed up with some ancient subterfuge, with the very act of creation. We know then whom to blame, whom to vilify; nothing flatters and sustains us more than being able to situate the source of our indignity at the farthest remove from ourselves.

As for the God who is properly so called, the good and feeble one, we find ourselves in harmony with him whenever all trace of a world in us is obliterated, during those moments which postulate him, moments consubstantial with him, in which he is conjured forth, *created,* rising from our depths to the greater humiliation of our faculties of sarcasm. God is the death knell of irony. Directly the latter collects its wits and gains the upper hand, our relations with him cloud and bog down. When this occurs, we are past querying ourselves about him, we want only to expel him from our concerns and our rages, even from our scorn. So many before us have dealt him blows, that it seems idle to belabor a corpse. Yet we continue to reckon with him, if only through our frustration at not having felled him ourselves.

*

To avoid the difficulties peculiar to dualism, one could imagine a single god whose history observes two phases: in the first, he is wise, sallow, involuted, never visited by the remotest whim to assert himself: a god *asleep,* worn out by his eternity; in the second, he is enterprising, frenzied, prone to commit error after error, and indulges in an activity reprehensible in the extreme. On further reflection, this hypothesis does not seem quite so clear and serviceable as that of two gods squarely opposed. But if you find that neither gives a just account of the world, you can always fall back on the view held by certain gnostics that everything came into existence when lots were drawn by the angels.

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(It is pitiful, it is degrading to liken the divinity to a person. Never can it be an anonymous idea or principle for anyone who has observed the Testaments. Twenty centuries of quibbling are not forgotten in a day. Our religious life, whether it draws its inspiration from Job or from Saint Paul, consists in quarrels, excesses, rabidity. Atheists, who are so quick to wield invective, prove beyond a doubt that their intended victim is *someone.* They shouldn't strut about; their emancipation is not as complete as they fancy: they have precisely the same idea of God that believers do.)

*

The creator is the absolute for the outer man; the inner man, on the contrary, considers creation an irksome detail, a useless, indeed baneful episode. He is intent on freeing himself, purifying himself of everything, including *light*—a blot and obstacle for the consciousness which senses strains on every level of being as it works its way toward the far reaches of nothingness. The mind hostile to whatever assumes some form, to whatever recalls the face of a universe, refuses, through hunger for the unspoiled, to come to terms with anything, anything but the "superessential abyss," as Ruysbroek calls it, which, despite the Flemish contemplative, does not ask of its aspirants that they necessarily have faith, provided they have done with appearances, with realities themselves. Every deep religious experience begins where the demiurge ceases to hold sway; it has no use for him, denounces him and is his very negation. So long as he haunts us, he and the world, we have no means of escaping either, of rejoining, in a burst of annihilation, the uncreated, and dissolving in it. With the aid of ecstasy—whose object is a god *without attributes,* an *essence* of god —we soar toward a form of apathy even purer than that of the lord of lords himself, and if we plunge into the divine, we are nonetheless beyond any form of divinity. That is the final step, the climax of mysticism, its starting point being a break with the demiurge, a refusal to traffic with him any longer and to applaud his handiwork. No man kneels before him, no man worships him. The only words spoken to him are the very opposite of prayers—the sole form of communication available to a creature and creator who are equally fallen.

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By being taxed with the functions of father, creator, and general manager, the official god was exposed to attacks that, inevitably, proved his undoing, Who knows how long he might have lived if only people had heeded Marcion, of all heresiarchs the one who stood foremost in the fray against the conjuring away of evil and who did more than any other to promote the glory of the evil god, by hating him so staunchly. There are scarcely any examples of a religion that, at its debut, bungled so many chances. We would undoubtedly be quite different today if the Christian era had been inaugurated with anathemas hurled against the creator, for permission to set upon him would surely have lightened our burden and rendered the past two millennia less oppressive. The Church, by refusing to incriminate him or to adopt doctrines that would condemn him, was necessarily resorting to slyness and falsehood. At least we can take comfort in noting that the most alluring chapters in its history have been written by its intimate enemies, all those whom it fought and expelled, those who, to save the honor of God, risked martyrdom by impugning his credentials as a creator. Enthusiasts of the divine void, of that absence in which the sovereign goodness takes delight, they knew the joy that comes of hating one god, and of loving another utterly, unreservedly. Carried away by their faith, they were in no condition to detect the particle of trumpery lodged in every torment, however sincere it may be. The notion of *pretext* had not yet been born, nor had the temptation, besetting us in this modern age, to hide our anguish behind some manner of theological acrobatics. Yet they were not free of ambiguity; it existed, however, on the instinctual level. These assorted gnostics and manicheans were, if anything, *depraved* with purity, haunted by horror. Evil attracted them, filled them nearly to overflowing: without it they would have been vacant. They pursued it, they would not let it go, even for an instant. And if they contended with such vehemence that it was *uncreated,* secretly they hoped that it might endure forever so as to enjoy it and be able, for eternity, to exert their combative virtues. Having, for love of the Father, reflected too closely upon the adversary, they were to end up with a better understanding of damnation than of salvation. That is why they were able to grasp so

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thoroughly the essence of the *here-below*. Will the Church, after having spat them out, be deft enough to adopt their theses, and charitable enough to give the creator a starring role, in order to excommunicate him at last? Its one chance of rebirth lies in exhuming the heresies, in recanting its old curses in order to pronounce new ones.

*

Timid, lacking in dynamism, the good is unfit to put itself across; evil, which is far more zealous, wants to impart itself, and succeeds because it possesses the twofold advantage of being fascinating and infectious, which explains why it is easier for an evil god to reach out, to come out of himself than it is for a good god.

This inability to stay put within oneself, which the creator demonstrated in a sorry spectacle, is something we have all inherited; by *engendering*, we continue, in another way and on another scale, the enterprise that bears his name. Deplorable mimics that we are, we add to his "creation." Without the impulse he gave, the desire to lengthen the chain of beings would not exist, nor would that compulsion of ours to engage in the promiscuities of flesh. Every procreation is suspect; angels are, happily, incapable of it, the propagation of life being an activity reserved for the fallen. This leprosy is impatient and eager, it loves to grow rampant. We must discourage procreation, since the fear that humanity will become extinct is baseless; whatever happens, there will be found on every side an ample supply of dolts whose one desire is to perpetuate themselves, and if they, too, lost their appetite, two hideous people could always be found to couple for the cause.

It's not so much the *taste* for life we must combat as the craving for "posterity." Parents, *progenitors*, are either trouble-makers or maniacs. Isn't it utterly demoralizing that the merest runt has the power to impart life, to "bring into the world"? How can it help but fill us with dread or repulsion, this miracle that, in a twinkling, transforms any Johnny-come-lately into a demiurge? What should be a gift as rare as genius has been conferred indiscriminately upon everyone: a counterfeit munificence that has discredited nature for good.

The criminal injunction of *Genesis*, "Be fruitful and multiply," could not have issued from the mouth of a good god. "Be

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sparse" is more likely what he would have said, if he had had any say in the chapter. Nor would it ever have been in him to add those baleful words, "replenish the earth and subdue it." We should drop everything at once and erase them, purging the Bible of the guilt it incurred by accepting them in the first place.

Flesh is spreading apace, like gangrene, over the surface of the globe. It doesn't know enough to observe limits, it keeps raging despite its orgies, it mistakes its defeats for conquests: it will never learn. It belongs above all to the dominion of the creator, and into it he projected all his wanton instincts. Logically, observers of the flesh should stand less chance of being smitten by it than those who help it endure, who assure its continuation. That is not the case, because they do not know with what perversion they are allied. One day pregnant women will be stoned, the maternal instinct banned, sterility acclaimed. Those sects that looked askance at fertility—the Bogomils and the Cathars—were right to condemn marriage, an abominable institution which societies have always defended, to the huge despair of those who resist the common hypnosis. Whoever procreates loves the scourge, wants to see it thrive and increase. They were right, those ancient philosophers who thought of fire as the essence of the universe, and of desire. For fire burns, devours, consumes; both sire and destroyer of beings, it is, by its nature, murky, infernal.

This world was not created in joy. We *pro*create, however, in pleasure. No doubt, yet pleasure is not joy but a simulacrum of it: its function is to hoodwink, to make us forget that the creation, down to its smallest detail, bears the imprint of that initial sadness from which it sprang. Inherently deceiving, it is the same sensation that allows us to go through with a certain performance of which, in theory, we disapprove. Without its help, chastity would make advances, seducing even rats. But only when absorbed in sensual ecstasy do we perceive to what extent pleasure is illusory. Through ecstasy it reaches its height, its greatest intensity, but there, at the summit of its success, it finds, gaping before it, its own unreality, and plummets into the void it is. Ecstasy is the *disaster* of pleasure.

The Immaculate Conception is something less than fatuous. Those who promulgated the idea knew what they were about. We find it inadmissible that a god, *or for that matter a man,* could is-

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sue from a round of gymnastics consummated by a groan. It is odd that after such a long period of time, "evolution" has not managed to fashion some other formula. But then why should it waste its energy when the one in vogue is working full swing, to everybody's satisfaction. Let's make one thing clear: we hold no brief against life, which is mysterious and bewildering enough to please anyone; what isn't is the exercise in question, whose facility, *given its consequences,* we can only deplore. Knowing what fate metes out to each of us, we stand confounded by the discrepancy between one moment of oblivion and the prodigious sum of disgraces that ensues. The more one mulls over this subject, the more convinced one is that the only people who have any understanding of it are those who opted for debauchery or forbearance, rakes or geldings.

Since procreating supposes an unspeakable lapse of mind, it is certain that we would—if we acquired some sense, if, in other words, we became indifferent to the fate of the species—keep only a few samples of it, the way we save specimens of animals threatened with extinction. Let us block the path of flesh, let us strive to stunt its appalling growth. We are witnessing a veritable epidemic of life, a pullulation of nondescripts. Where, and how, can we still meet God face to face?

No man is constantly subject to the obsession with horror we sometimes succeed in averting our gaze from it, in almost forgetting it, especially when we contemplate some landscape devoid of our fellow men. Directly they intrude, our mind is re-obsessed. If we were inclined to absolve the creator, to consider this world acceptable and even satisfactory, we would still have reservations about man, that black speck of creation.

*

We are at liberty to imagine that one day the demiurge, when struck with the inadequacy or the perniciousness of his work, may wish to bring about its doom, and even arrange to disappear along with it. But it is also conceivable that, from the beginning, his one concern has been to destroy himself, that the future may unfold according to the workings of this slow self-destruction. An unfolding that could be sluggish or breathless, but in either case, would mean an involution, a self-scrutiny leading to the rejection of creation by its author.

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There is nothing in us more deeply-rooted and less perceptible than the feeling of some essential failure: it is everyone's secret, including the gods'. The remarkable thing is that most people don't even suspect that they experience this feeling. By a special favor nature has granted us, we are destined to remain unaware of it: the strength of a being resides in his inability to know how alone he is. A blessed ignorance, thanks to which he can bustle about and act. Has his secret just been revealed to him? Directly it is, his spirit of enterprise fizzles, for good. That is what befell the creator, or will befall him, perhaps.

*

To have lived from the outset with the yearning to identify ourselves with something, not knowing with what. . . . It is easy to pass from unbelief to belief, or the other way around. But what is there to convert to or abjure when in the clutches of chronic lucidity? Devoid of substance, it offers no content which one could gainsay; it is vacuous, and a void cannot be gainsaid. Lucidity is the negative counterpart of ecstasy.

Whoever identifies himself with nothing finds no identity in himself either, which prompts those faithless cries, those vacillating convictions, those fevers deprived of fire, that duality impairing our ideas and even our reflexes. The ambiguous, which governs all our relations with this world, and with the other, was something we kept to ourselves at first; then we spread it all around so that no one could escape it, so that no one alive might still know what to believe. Nowhere is anything *clear:* we are to blame that things themselves stumble and collapse into perplexity. Where is there a single pristine object, a single object still intact to which we can hold fast? The false has wormed into matter, making of it this swindling lump from which we shrink with mixed feelings of disgust and fright. What we need is the gift to imagine the possibility of praying, which is indispensable to anyone who has hopes of being saved. Hell is *inconceivable* prayer.

The establishment of universal ambiguity is our most calamitous exploit; it has made us rivals of the demiurge.

*

We have been happy only during times when, eager to efface

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ourselves, we accepted our nothingness with alacrity. Religious feeling emanates not from the recognition of our insignificance, but from our enthusiasm for it, from our need to wallow in it. How will this need, which is inherent in our nature, be appeased now that we can no longer live in the wake of the gods? In former times, it was they who forsook us; now we forsake them. We have lived familiarly with them too long not to find them undesirable; they were so close at hand we could hear them *stir;* they would lie in wait for us, they would spy on us: we no longer felt at home. . . . Well, experience has taught us that there is no more odious creature on earth than our neighbor. Knowing that so little space separates us from him prevents us from breathing, and makes our days and nights equally unlivable. It's useless to spend hours meditating his ruin for he is there, appallingly present. All our thoughts invite us to suppress him: when, at length, we resolve to do it, an attack of cowardice stays our hand. Thus we are potential murderers of anyone living in our vicinity and, for being unable to commit that murder, we devour ourselves and grow embittered, triflers and bunglers in crime.

If, under the gods, everything seemed simple, that is because, in the light of their immemorial indiscretion, we had to get rid of them at all costs: they were already too cumbersome to be dealt with gently. That explains why each of us could not but add his tiny voice to the general uproar against them.

*

Man is a perverse animal; he loves only what he destroys. He relishes remorse, or at least regret: he idolizes his victims. Ever since we liquidated the gods, we have been talking about them constantly; we have all become theologians. . . . So long as they were around, we placed all our hope in science; now we see all too clearly that they had more to offer than science does. So we have come to rely upon them once again, if only to punish ourselves for having been ingrates. In any event, we are not about to forget them. They haunt us, and will continue to do so for a long time to come; it is even possible that all future history will be reduced to a rumination on their fate. Formerly, when their glory was at its height, people would, after dunning them with sacrifices and praise, treat them tactfully, and leave them be;—only we har-

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ass them unremittingly, conjuring forth their shades with fussy single-mindedness. We fling ourselves at them, asking questions, we discover in them secrets we planted there to give an aura of substance to our erudite but ineffectual piety. When faith, for lack of an object, degenerates into an historical or psychological mania, self-reflection being its one pursuit and justification, the act of prayer is watered down to nostalgia for prayer, or to the theory of prayer. We don't know to whom to turn, we are thrust upon ourselves: an elegiac void has supplanted several centuries of subversive void. How have we managed to dismiss so many gods? Happily, we have one remaining. . . .

When we think about these millennial companions or enemies, about all the ring-leaders of sects, religions and mythologies, the only one whom we are loath to give up is this demiurge, to whom we are attached by the very ills which, we want to think, he has sponsored. The least act in life, or simply life itself, brings him to mind. Every time we consider life, and ponder over its origins, it amazes and frightens us, for it is a frightening miracle which must derive from *him,* a special god standing completely apart. It does no good to contend that he doesn't exist when our daily bewilderment calls for his reality and proclaims it. Will someone object that it's possible he did exist, but died like the others?—our bewilderment would not be daunted, it would go to work resuscitating him, and endure as long as our wonder and our fear, as the quaking curiosity we feel about everything that is, everything alive. Someone will say, "Overcome fear, so that only wonder survives." But, in order to overcome it, to dispel it, one would have to attack its very principle and raze its foundations, rebuild nothing more nor less than the entire world, nimbly change demiurges, in short, one would have to confide oneself to some *other* creator.

[*Translated by Frederick Brown*]

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JOSEPH BENNETT

Reflections on Athos

And in Jerusalem, the Holy Sepulchre
Radiance of fires, burning of wax
Bearded archimandrites, and behind the iconostasis
The Virgin, like a tarantula, dances with the Son,
Half-naked, mouth open, crown of thorn,
Lies, face-upward on her cloaked lap, hands apart,
And on his starved rib-cage the running red gouge,
The mouthful of bone and meat
Destroys his starveling lines, his death's head grace;
Where her mouth has torn him;
The Mother devours the Son.
This pot of honey runs down her knees
This orthodox foetus
She holds till it becomes stiff.
Then, turning, the embalmers engrave wooden ribs upon it
And stiffen its tears;
Leaving the mouthhole where she gorged
Her appetite
Become immortal

And she moves on, to other foods,
But he remains, choked in wax and wood,
For us to chew on.
Mistress of the caves, she has dragged her bloody prey
Inside, by hindquarters, to feed her young,
And puts out another trap
Letting us bear the old one away to fill our churches.
The grinning face of death
Christ's skeleton,
Stares down at us from the chancel
Hanging grisly from the blue-red glitter of stained glass
And we have our altars

His arms are outspread
Phosgene fills the trenches

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And the troops, legs cased in puttees, move toward Verdun

Ambulatory
These monks glide above the sea
Winged beards, disputes over gardens,
Wells, grapes, and fish
Younger monks have curious blond beards
Smiling among fig trees
Here at Pandelaimonos where the Czarina gave
The onion domes
The plaster flaking in pastel sheets
The sky is a synthetic dome
The sea ripples its silk in long, occasional trails
Only the cactus will grow here,
Only the monk, retaining Czarist foundations,
Dreams of the Little Father
And the carob tree too grows here
With its tough, elastic pods
And these are for the calves to eat
Swung on baskets above the sea
To rocky pinnacles of outbuilt planks
Here the drying Christ is shriveled
To a long brown pod
Here the tears and blood
Become the memory of a thousand sunsets
To burnt-out eye sockets
The eye-white turned to red, the jelly; the red to leather and wood.
Here above the sea, in the tottering arcades, the rickety balconies,
Collapsing staves and drying wells,
Here where earthquakes have seamed the wells, cleft the bell-hang,
Where the abbot rents rooms

The vast seas reign

Weather prophets watch the saucer of gold
Turn green and white and gold again

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Stand up against the winds,
The waves of winter shuddering
Rocks and weeds surround the little tables
Of the feast, dissected Jesus
Emblems for each mouth
Decahedral lozenges, eucharistic
Dissolve within the pink slit
Of each beard.
Crabs and sea-flea are visible
Below the tide-line;
The monks search there
With clawing hands; with long-poled butterfly nets
They sweep the seas
Waiting for the swells
From Byzantium, Propontis,
Laden with jewels of the Holy Crown
Rich, bloody rubies, swelling drops
From sea-thorn, the brow of the crucified Sea-God
Impaled upon his trident, a Neptune of despair
The earthquake country at the bottom of the sea
Among smoking fissures
In the submarine canyons,
Quaking, revolting, rejecting him
He lurks, anguished
In the lees of the sea
In the sulfurous eddies of its washing canyons
His lips showing only at low tide
Where he rejects shellfish and sea urchins,
Fish stranded in pools
For the priests to catch

Monks of a brilliant shoreline
Stragglers from Olympus
The effluent of the Dardanelles
Drenches your beaches as the north wind blows
Your beards fly in the breeze
You gaze at the sea gulls,
Glaros,
The shell of a pearl

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An oyster of faith
Tears shed by the Czarina's sister
Novgorod's thousand bulb-domes

The Emperors' galleys sweep by
The oil lamps flicker
A monk goes by on a motor bike,
Haversack on shoulder, a wild eye, a wild beard
Madness, locomotive, squatting on one cylinder
Shifting the marches of his gears
The haversack full of carob beans
He will feed the calves
From his own drunken stomach
At festival time, the Corpse of Christ,
With its flowers, calls him for its June feasting.
The old eyes quiver, blind with sunsets,
The old hands quiver, from sexual abuse,
Tobacco flakes fill the beards
Of these saints without a Pope
There in the Phanar
Sits the old man, without a footstool, without a tiara, no sword of state, no gloves, no belt; hat or orb
The star and crescent
The long slumber of primitive religions
The perfume of faith is heavy and dull
Christ bleeds like a stunned ox
Beneath the mallet
And the executioner stands there
At one with God.

The Mother dances, the Great Tarantula,
Rejoicing that her hairy mouth is opened
And is filled, opened and is filled.
Mother and Son, their excrements provide sacraments for the living
And stones, hardening, for the dead.
The corpse curls and hardens into rock
In this moistureless soil
In dry chalk pebbles

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Shallow pits within a white-washed wall
Where the north wind blows the tips of the waves bright-blue
And the advancing waves topple steadily, rapid against the ripple-line of advancing rocks
And the cemetery stands there, its grasses combed by steady air,
Its pebbles blown, its white-washed stones
Boundary lines and the monks lie there, in the teeth of the wind
The wooden crosses creak, obliterated,
And the wooden Christ flops there, beneath its gable
Scarecrow of the dead
Wings cracked and gray and twisted
Sculpture of driftwood
Gnawed sides
Eaten by ringworm
Ridden by ants
Face agonized by wind and rain
So gray, this wood, these contorting cheeks, this anguished brow, these thorns
The gulls flee, cawing, to other rocks
High on other sea peaks
Fleeing the sea of the monks
Dropping their crabs
For this is the Sea of the Dead
In the bright sunlight
The sunsets accumulate
Under the brazen weight of light
The lids hang down
Until they close
The lead eyes of weighted dolls
And the heavy monks
Creep into the mountainside
In caverns to die
Shielding their eyes from the light,
Seeing only a gleam, white, at the mouth of the cave
But even this is too much
And they are dropped, feet first,
From their caverns
And placed in the chalk, in the gravel,

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Beneath stick crosses
Not to moulder, in the monks' sea cemetery,
But to curl, and twist, and contort,
Their scab-like bodies drying
Without unguents
In the calcifying soil
There is no coffin, no planks
They curl about their God
Seaching among carob-trees and figs
Their spiritual life twists in intricate spirals
The body uncoils its wisdom
The mound at the top of the grave shifts
The body settles in, a scant three feet,
And these dolls of Christ begin the last long journey
In a comfortable position, rolled up,
As if in urns
And the journey begins,
There, with the Czarina and the Empress Irene,
The eunuchs and the slaves, the brightly-colored palace cooks
Harems of blessedness, these monks' cemeteries
The brutal foot of the Franks tramples overhead
The subtle tread of the Islamic Turk

As scraps of flesh,
As sun-dried beans, kidney-shaped,
Beef curled about its knots
There are eyes in this low place facing the sea
The north wind awakes us, all the night,
Stirring the grasses, tumbling the white-walled stones of our boundaries
The monks must come again and re-build
Breaking off our crosses, this wind,
And we are left with a stub, a sliver of sea-dried silver wood
To mark our hearts
Where in a dried curdle of blood
They once stood and pulsed
But now are the hardest part of us, the most calcified,
In little pockets of stone, ruby-colored and grained
Used for jewels, excavated by commercial firms,

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Kitchen middens of the little dried bodies
Sold in concessions by the state;
Each heart, split and carved on a machine,
Yields chip upon chip of hardest ruby gem.
Cut and polished

Our carved hearts are whimsy
To adorn the frivolous;
Skiers use us as talismans
Regaining de luxe hotels
After hours on the lifts
In the cabin of the *téléférique*
When it stops, above a chasm,
And the rock-pipes, funnelled, swirl above us in the snow,
And the sun is blinded in the blizzard drifts,
We finger these pieces, on neck-chains,
And as the slow lurch of the machinery
Pulls us upward again
And we learn that the lubrication froze, the diesel stopped,
Regaining the surface at the lodge
We look at the cold steel cabin
And the skiers' faces are gray with the sunshine
Of a nether world
And there is grayness in the skin
And the gray lives of the monks
Swirl around us in the whirlwind
Of that suspended cabin, two thousand feet about the floor
Of the canyon
We stare down rock pipes
At the sempiternal snow
And we are lost, the car floats, detaches, gravity-less,
Its tether a guide-line
To keep the dirigible from flying.

The snow settles higher, in drifts
The floor rises about us
The snow clogs the windows

Discs of echo,
Discs of memory

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Whirling silver
Upon the heads
Climbing silver cliffs
To the monastery
Here the abbot plies the bones of his monks
In living robes
And the cemetery, sea-swept,
Is robbed of its hearts
Provides rosettes for catacombs
The twisted, dried, excavated bodies
Shriveled and small,
Hearts torn out.
Corpses decorate the central church.

The hearts were not enough.
The abbot wins at every game.
They come to rob him of his corpses.
The bones are needed.
For carvings of ivory
And these shall decorate
The Virgin's Tomb in Rome
Analepsis, Resurrection of the Female,
Is the last rite,
The last excursion
The abbot's casque floats
Wrapped in black silk
To reach the Emperor's gate beyond the Bosporus
Among the sewage
Where he, Monomaque, riots with eunuchs
And in Constantinian grandeur
The Basileus sits

Nothing smooth shall be
Upon the chin,
Nor any hen, nor any child
No smooth-faced object shall disturb the monks
At their skiing
On these mirror-bright shores
Beneath the cliffs

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The rudders haul
The sails tug
The hulls get around the peak
Beneath the monastery
Oars flailing
Slaves sweating
The noise of the horn which calls the beat
And the monks watch
The Emperor's flag, the square equal cross,
Fills every sail
They pursue the Turk, star and crescent
And the Frank sweeps down
The monks glide there
In the elevator of the ropeway
The disastrous necessity for monasteries
Guarding their manuscripts
And searching the high cliffs in winter
The long night through
The faces of seas, milk-strewn;
The bearded monk, seated on his low wall,
On white-washed chalk. He holds a sprig of olive in his hand,
A piece of bread, oil from the press. A white horse turns
In the meadow beneath.
The white horse turns the press.
Olives drop from the trees, small and hard,
Shaken by poles
From trunks two thousand years old
Living things, the silver gray wood,
Enormously ugly, twisted and carved,
Shorn of branches and bark
This monstrous thing, this tree from the rock
Puts the monks to shade

In their ecclesiastical sleep,
Dreaming of Thais, and of smooth-faced children,
The elderly genitals twitch, useless and unused,
But strangely potent, in the way of the unwashed.
Ancient men crumble into the vines of their rocks
Into the veins, to form lodes of ore

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The fossilized bones of earlier generations
Are raised in claws, in clusters,
By bulldozers equipped with scoops
The company has arrived
The last ones, survivors,
Are crated to havens, merciful,
In cities redolent of politics
And the growth of houses.
Disturb the food of the dead.
The monks receive theirs
On long refectory-like tables
Wooden reminders, on trestles, provided by the state,
Of their former ecstasy.

Olives.

While above the rocks,
The eagles come.
Their kingdom is come.
Their lands are come.
The houses are empty, of the monasteries.
The door clangs shut, opens and clangs shut.
Until the hoteliers arrive, until the wind, with blueprints and
great plans
And income is produced
The scraps of monks wither away on wooden tables
And the century begins another laughing century
You may sleep in a monk's cell
To the sound of central plumbing,
The waves of radiant heat.
The casino arises.
And the fashion show.
The eagles are in the air.

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THOMAS MERTON

Day of a Stranger

THE HILLS ARE BLUE AND HOT. There is a brown, dusty field in the bottom of the valley. I hear a machine, a bird, a clock. The clouds are high and enormous. Through them the inevitable jet plane passes: this time probably full of passengers from Miami to Chicago. What passengers? This I have no need to decide. They are out of my world, up there, busy sitting in their small, isolated, arbitrary lounge that does not even seem to be moving—the lounge that somehow unaccountably picked them up off the earth in Florida to suspend them for a while with timeless cocktails and then let them down in Illinois. The suspension of modern life in contemplation that *gets you somewhere!*

There are also other worlds above me. Other jets will pass over, with other contemplations and other modalities of intentness.

I have seen the SAC plane, with the bomb in it, fly low over me and I have looked up out of the woods directly at the closed bay of the metal bird with a scientific egg in its breast! A womb easily and mechanically opened! I do not consider this technological mother to be the friend of anything I believe in. However, like everyone else, I live in the shadow of the apocalyptic cherub. I am surveyed by it, impersonally. Its number recognizes my number. Are these numbers preparing at some moment to coincide in the benevolent mind of a computer? This does not concern me, for I live in the woods as a reminder that I am free not to be a number.

There is, in fact, a choice.

*

In an age where there is much talk about "being yourself" I reserve to myself the right to forget about being myself, since in any case there is very little chance of my being anybody else. Rather it seems to me that when one is too intent on "being himself" he runs the risk of impersonating a shadow.

Yet I cannot pride myself on special freedom, simply because I am living in the woods. I am accused of living in the woods like Thoreau instead of living in the desert like St. John the Baptist.

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All I can answer is that I am not living "like anybody." Or "unlike anybody." We all live somehow or other, and that's that. It is a compelling necessity for me to be free to embrace the necessity of my own nature.

I exist under trees. I walk in the woods out of necessity. I am both a prisoner and an escaped prisoner. I cannot tell you why, born in France, my journey ended here in Kentucky. I have considered going further, but it is not practical. It makes no difference. Do I have a "day"? Do I spend my "day" in a "place"? I know there are trees here. I know there are birds here. I know the birds in fact very well, for there are precise pairs of birds (two each of fifteen or twenty species) living in the immediate area of my cabin. I share this particular place with them: we form an ecological balance. This harmony gives the idea of "place" a new configuration.

As to the crows, they form part of a different pattern. They are vociferous and self-justifying, like humans. They are not two, they are many. They fight each other and the other birds, in a constant state of war.

•

There is a mental ecology, too, a living balance of spirits in this corner of the woods. There is room here for many other songs besides those of birds. Of Vallejo for instance. Or Rilke, or René Char, Montale, Zukofsky, Ungaretti, Edwin Muir, Quasimodo or some Greeks. Or the dry, disconcerting voice of Nicanor Parra, the poet of the sneeze. Here is also Chuang Tzu whose climate is perhaps most the climate of this silent corner of woods. A climate in which there is no need for explanations. Here is the reassuring companionship of many silent Tzu's and Fu's; Kung Tzu, Lao Tzu, Meng Tzu. Tu Fu. And Hui Neng. And Chao-Chu. And the drawings of Sengai. And a big graceful scroll from Suzuki. Here also is a Syrian hermit called Philoxenus. An Algerian cenobite called Camus. Here is heard the clanging prose of Tertullian, with the dry catarrh of Sartre. Here the voluble dissonances of Auden, with the golden sounds of John of Salisbury. Here is the deep vegetation of that more ancient forest in which the angry birds, Isaias and Jeremias, sing. Here should be, and are, feminine voices from Angela of Foligno to Flannery O'Connor, Theresa of Avila, Juliana of Norwich, and, more personally and warmly still,

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Raissa Maritain. It is good to choose the voices that will be heard in these woods, but they also choose themselves, and send themselves here to be present in this silence. In any case there is no lack of voices.

*

The hermit life is cool. It is a life of low definition in which there is little to decide, in which there are few transactions or none, in which there are no packages delivered. In which I do not bundle up packages and deliver them to myself. It is not intense. There is no give and take of questions and answers, problems and solutions. Problems begin down the hill. Over there under the water tower are the solutions. Here there are woods, foxes. Here there is no need for dark glasses. "Here" does not even warm itself up with references to "there." It is just a "here" for which there is no "there." The hermit life is that cool.

The monastic life as a whole is a hot medium. Hot with words like "must," "ought" and "should." Communities are devoted to high definition projects: "making it all clear!" The clearer it gets the clearer it has to be made. It branches out. You have to keep clearing the branches. The more branches you cut back the more branches grow. For one you cut you get three more. On the end of each branch there is a big bushy question mark. People are running all around with packages of meaning. Each is very anxious to know whether all the others have received the latest messages. Has someone else received a message that he has not received? Will they be willing to pass it on to him? Will he understand it when it is passed on? Will he have to argue about it? Will he be expected to clear his throat and stand up and say "Well the way I look at it St. Benedict said . . . ?" Saint Benedict saw that the best thing to do with the monastic life was to cool it but today everybody is heating it up. Maybe to cool it you have to be a hermit. But then they will keep thinking that *you* have got a special message. When they find out you haven't. . . . Well, that's their worry, not mine.

*

This is not a hermitage—it is a house. ("Who was that hermitage I seen you with last night? . . .") What I wear is pants. What I do is live. How I pray is breathe. Who said Zen? Wash out your

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mouth if you said Zen. If you see a meditation going by, shoot it. Who said "Love?" Love is in the movies. The spiritual life is something that people worry about when they are so busy with something else they think they ought to be spiritual. Spiritual life is guilt. Up here in the woods is seen the New Testament: that is to say, the wind comes through the trees and you breathe it. Is it supposed to be clear? I am not inviting anybody to try it. Or suggesting that one day the message will come saying NOW. That is none of my business.

*

I am out of bed at two-fifteen in the morning, when the night is darkest and most silent. Perhaps this is due to some ailment or other. I find myself in the primordial lostness of night, solitude, forest, peace, a mind awake in the dark, looking for a light, not totally reconciled to being out of bed. A light appears, and in the light an ikon. There is now in the large darkness a small room of radiance with psalms in it. The psalms grow up silently by themselves without effort like plants in this light which is favorable to them. The plants hold themselves up on stems which have a single consistency, that of mercy, or rather great mercy. *Magna misericordia.* In the formlessness of night and silence a word then pronounces itself: Mercy. It is surrounded by other words of lesser consequence: "destroy iniquity" "Wash me" "purify" "I know my iniquity." *Peccavi.* Concepts without interest in the world of business, war, politics, culture, etc. Concepts also often without serious interest to ecclesiastics.

Other words: Blood. Guile. Anger. The way that is not good. The way of blood, guile, anger, war.

Out there the hills in the dark lie southward. The way over the hills is blood, guile, dark, anger, death: Selma, Birmingham, Mississippi. Nearer than these, the atomic city, from which each day a freight car of fissionable material is brought to be laid carefully beside the gold in the underground vault which is at the heart of this nation.

"Their mouth is the opening of the grave; their tongues are set in motion by lies; their heart is void."

Blood, lies, fire, hate, the opening of the grave, void. Mercy, great mercy.

The birds begin to wake. It will soon be dawn. In an hour or

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two the towns will wake, and men will enjoy everywhere the great luminous smiles of production and business.

*

—Why live in the woods?
—Well, you have to live somewhere.
—Do you get lonely?
—Yes, sometimes.
—Are you mad at people?
—No.
—Are you mad at the monastery?
—No.
—What do you think about the future of monasticism?
—Nothing. I don't think about it.
—Is it true that your bad back is due to Yoga?
—No.
—Is it true that you are practising Zen in secret?
—Pardon me, I don't speak English.

*

All monks, as is well known, are unmarried, and hermits more unmarried than the rest of them. Not that I have anything against women. I see no reason why a man can't love God and a woman at the same time. If God was going to regard women with a jealous eye, why did he go and make them in the first place? There is a lot of talk about a married clergy. Interesting. So far there has not been a great deal said about married hermits. Well, anyway, I have the place full of ikons of the Holy Virgin.

One might say I had decided to marry the silence of the forest. The sweet dark warmth of the whole world will have to be my wife. Out of the heart of that dark warmth comes the secret that is heard only in silence, but it is the root of all the secrets that are whispered by all the lovers in their beds all over the world. So perhaps I have an obligation to preserve the stillness, the silence, the poverty, the virginal point of pure nothingness which is at the center of all other loves. I attempt to cultivate this plant without comment in the middle of the night and water it with psalms and prophecies in silence. It becomes the most rare of all the trees in the garden, at once the primordial paradise tree, the *axis mundi,* the cosmic axle, and the Cross. *Nulla silva talem profert.* There is only one such tree. It cannot be multiplied. It is not interesting.

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*

It is necessary for me to see the first point of light which begins to be dawn. It is necessary to be present alone at the resurrection of Day, in the blank silence when the sun appears. In this completely neutral instant I receive from the Eastern woods, the tall oaks, the one word "DAY," which is never the same. It is never spoken in any known language.

*

Sermon to the birds: "Esteemed friends, birds of noble lineage, I have no message to you except this: be what you are: be *birds*. Thus you will be your own sermon to yourselves!"

Reply: "Even this is one sermon too many!"

*

Rituals. Washing out the coffee pot in the rain bucket. Approaching the outhouse with circumspection on account of the king snake who likes to curl up on one of the beams inside. Addressing the possible king snake in the outhouse and informing him that he should not be there. Asking the formal ritual question that is asked at this time every morning: "Are you in there, you bastard?"

*

More rituals: Spray bedroom (cockroaches and mosquitoes). Close all the windows on South side (heat). Leave windows open on north and east sides (cool). Leave windows open on west side until maybe June when it gets very hot on all sides. Pull down shades. Get water bottle. Rosary. Watch. Library book to be returned.

It is time to visit the human race.

*

I start out under the pines. The valley is already hot. Machines out there in the bottoms, perhaps planting corn. Fragrance of the woods. Cool west wind under the oaks. Here is the place on the path where I killed a copperhead. There is the place where I saw the fox run daintily and carefully for cover carrying a rabbit in his mouth. And there is the cement cross that, for no reason, the

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novices rescued from the corner of a destroyed wall and put up in the woods: people imagine someone is buried there. It is just a cross. Why should there not be a cement cross by itself in the middle of the woods?

A squirrel is kidding around somewhere overhead in midair. Tree to tree. The coquetry of flight.

I come out into the open over the hot hollow and the old sheep barn. Over there is the monastery, bugging with windows, humming with action.

The long yellow side of the monastery faces the sun on a sharp rise with fruit trees and beehives. This is without question one of the least interesting buildings on the face of the earth. However, in spite of the most earnest efforts to deprive it of all character and keep it ugly, it is surpassed in this respect by the vast majority of other monasteries. It is so completely plain that it ends, in spite of itself, by being at least simple. A lamentable failure of religious architecture—to come so close to non-entity and yet not fully succeed! I climb sweating into the novitiate, and put down my water bottle on the cement floor. The bell is ringing. I have duties, obligations, since here I am a monk. When I have accomplished these, I return to the woods where I am nobody. In the choir are the young monks, patient, serene, with very clear eyes, then, reflective, gentle, confused. Today perhaps I tell them of Eliot's *Little Gidding*, analyzing the first movement of the poem ("Midwinter spring in its own season"). They will listen with attention thinking some other person is talking to them about some other poem.

*

Chanting the *alleluia* in the second mode: strength and solidity of the Latin, seriousness of the second mode, built on the *Re* as though on a sacrament, a presence. One keeps returning to the *re* as to an inevitable center. *Sol-Re, Fa-Re, Sol-Re, Do-Re.* Many other notes in between, but suddenly one hears only the one note. *Consonantia:* all notes, in their perfect distinctness, are yet blended in one. (Through a curious oversight Gregorian chant has continued to be sung in this monastery. But not for long.)

*

In the refectory is read a message of the Pope, denouncing war,

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denouncing the bombing of civilians, reprisals on civilians, killing of hostages, torturing of prisoners (all in Vietnam). Do the people of this country realize who the Pope is talking about? They have by now become so solidly convinced that the Pope never denounces anybody but Communists that they have long since ceased to listen. The monks seem to know. The voice of the reader trembles.

*

In the heat of noon I return with the water bottle freshly filled, through the cornfield, past the barn under the oaks, up the hill, under the pines, to the hot cabin. Larks rise out of the long grass singing. A bumblebee hums under the wide shady eaves.

I sit in the cool back room, where words cease to resound, where all meanings are absorbed in the *consonantia* of heat, fragrant pine, quiet wind, bird song and one central tonic note that is unheard and unuttered. This is no longer a time of obligations. In the silence of the afternoon all is present and all is inscrutable in one central tonic note to which every other sound ascends or descends, to which every other meaning aspires, in order to find its true fulfillment. To ask when the note will sound is to lose the afternoon: it has already sounded, and all things now hum with the resonance of its sounding.

*

I sweep. I spread a blanket out in the sun. I cut grass behind the cabin. I write in the heat of the afternoon. Soon I will bring the blanket in again and make the bed. The sun is over-clouded. The day declines. Perhaps there will be rain. A bell rings in the monastery. A devout Cistercian tractor growls in the valley. Soon I will cut bread, eat supper, say psalms, sit in the back room as the sun sets, as the birds sing outside the window, as night descends on the valley. I become surrounded once again by all the silent Tzu's and Fu's (men without office and without obligation). The birds draw closer to their nests. I sit on the cool straw mat on the floor, considering the bed in which I will presently sleep alone under the ikon of the Nativity.

Meanwhile the metal cherub of the apocalypse passes over me in the clouds, treasuring its egg and its message.

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GALWAY KINNELL

The Porcupine

1

Fatted
on herbs, swollen on crabapples,
puffed up on bast and phloem, ballooned
on willow flowers, poplar catkins, first
leafs of aspen and larch,
the porcupine
drags and bounces his last meal through ice,
mud, roses and goldenrod, into the stubbly high fields.

2

In character
he resembles us in seven ways:
he puts his mark on outhouses,
he alchemizes by moonlight,
he shits on the run,
he uses his tail for climbing,
he chuckles softly to himself when scared,
he's overcrowded if there's more than one of him per five acres,
his eyes have their own inner redness.

3

Digger of
goings across floors, of hesitations
at thresholds, of
handprints of dread
at doorpost or window jamb, he would
gouge the world
empty of us, hack and crater
it
until it is nothing, if that
could rinse it of all our sweat and pathos.

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Adorer of ax
handles aflow with grain, of arms
of Morris chairs, of hand
crafted objects
steeped in the juice of fingertips,
of surfaces wetted down
with fist grease and elbow oil,
of clothespins that have
grabbed our body-rags by underarm and crotch,

unimpressed—*bored*—
by the whirl of the stars, by *these*
he's astonished, ultra-
Rilkean angel!

for whom the true
portion of the sweetness of earth
is one of those bottom-heavy, glittering, saccadic bits
of salt water that splash down
the haunted ravines of a *human* face.

4

A farmer shot a porcupine three times
as it dozed on a tree limb. On
the way down it tore open its belly
on a broken
branch, hooked its gut,
and went on falling. On the ground
it sprang to its feet, and
paying out gut heaved
and spartled through a hundred feet of goldenrod before
the abrupt emptiness.

5

The Avesta
puts porcupine killers

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into hell for nine generations, sentencing them
to gnaw out
each others' hearts for the
salts of desire.

And I roll
this way and that in the great bed, under
the quilt
that mimics this country of broken farms and woods,
the fatty sheath of the man
melting off,
the self-stabbing coil
of bristles reversing, blossoming outward—
a red-eyed, hard-toothed, arrow-stuck urchin
tossing up mattress feathers,
pricking the
woman beside me until she cries.

6

In my time I have
crouched, quills erected,
Saint
Sebastian of the
scared heart, and been
beat dead with a locust club
on the bare snout.

And fallen from high places
I have fled, have
jogged
over fields of goldenrod,
terrified, seeking home.
And among flowers
I have come to myself empty, the rope
strung out behind me
in the fall sun
suddenly glorified with all my blood.

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7

And tonight I think I prowl broken
skulled or vacant as a
sucked egg in the wintry meadow, softly chuckling,
blank template of myself, dragging
a starved belly through the lichflowered acres,
where
burdock looses the arks of its seed
and thistle holds up its lost blooms
and rosebushes in the wind scrape their dead limbs
for the forced-fire
of roses.

F. D. REEVE

Poem

The earth moves underneath us like a train
of stars click-clacking down the dotted line
of the Zodiac from Capricorn
to Pisces.
Bang! and Spring from crocus corns
bursts into bloom, a yellow meteor
exploded on the lawn of midnight.
Easter:
the stars are fireflies.
You and I
float on our fingers through the speckled dark
each, like Adam in the fresco high
on the ceiling, stretching for the spark.

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JEAN GARRIGUE

Cracked Looking Glass

The tears, the firebursts and the vows,
The wild caprices and the bouts of pulse
The chills of sieged despairs, those flowers
Brought to match eyes and proffer aphrodisiacs
Of sighs and groans; the seizures.
World at the end of world when dusk falls slow
And all else but a taunting fast and loose.
Smooth skin, shut eyes and gliding limbs.

Love, I note you, stroke by stroke,
And show you how you play with shameless art
In the cracked looking glass that I hold up
What practice has made perfect, if it has.
The fits and starts, the going then to stay
The word, the gesture meant to take the heart
(If it be studied or be not)
Grand ceremonials of a play
By which we tried to live a passion out
By every nuance in a little room.
And cloistered so, tell out our stories
To pass the time until the moon rode high,
Improve upon the life we led,
Give gifts of praise, and so we did.
And if you postured in the looking glass
I made it for you, I held the witchery up
For you to see the secret life I guessed,
That more than improbable, celestial otherness.
And if you acted what I taught
Even as I learned it at your eyes
And your each ruse took on as if we borrowed
From every trick known to the over-wrought
And half-Platonic specialist,
We did it under moon craft or in twilight,
In all the half hours when the world becomes
All that imagination ever hoped it was.

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My tear-quenched cost, I number half the ways
We chose a smoky vapor over fire
And tried to make a greater truth
Than what our contradictions could allow,
Exclaiming, as we breathed,
The true irrational.
And yet we were what we are.
And though the smoke is gone there is some fire
In saying so.

We made a play but not a discipline.
Love is the sternest master of the school.
But players tell a truth they cannot know.
They do not live it either, they enact
The fiery powers of instants in a light
Held up to them they cannot clarify.
Cease and be still. The pain is otherwise.
It's in the breaking face the clouds give to the moon
And in the flower that leans upon the air
Pouring its full life out into its scent.

St. Sulpice

Morning: a still profoundness in the air
Shrouded with shreds and tatters of a silk
Of mist left standing in the boughs of trees
That pigeons wade through in a way of leaves
Sheared in the dark storm of the night before.
And one has come to sleeping lions here
Postured at the fountain for a drink
Of waters younger than the time we know
And somnolence of wet leaves and wet feet
Of birded morning in some temperance
Of dark facades, the regal ledge,
The half-cracked towers that rise upon the square
Like something that a pensive man has thought:
And on the porch blown feathers in a drift
For brides to walk in when the portals part.

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JOSEPH WHITEHILL

Living on the Edge

FOUR YEARS AGO, WHEN CHARLIE RALSTON moved them and their things by himself in a rented truck from Roanoke to Salisbury, he stumbled on the broken walk of their new house—caught his heel, he did—and dropped a lamp and their little plastic-cased clock radio. Great Glorie, thank God, was inside standing beaten in the bare living room scratching her big behind with both hands, and did not see it. Charlie therefore quickly, quietly, gave the pieces of the lamp to the mumbly Negro helping him, and hid the cracked radio. In a week, when he had returned the truck to Roanoke and had a minute to himself, he carefully laid three strips of Scotch tape along the crack and put the radio in their headboard where it belonged.

In a year, when he knew everybody he needed to, and could ask favors without owing their return, and when, because of age and the heat of the tubes inside, the Scotch tape had yellowed and curled and drawn back leaving a sticky, dirty edge-print, he took the radio to the simple A. & P. mechanic in the Salisbury hangar and before the man's wary eyes removed the light little chassis from the plastic case. He handed the case to the mechanic for a proper aircraft repair.

While the mechanic stepped off rivet hole locations with his walking dividers, and sheared a small strip of 24 ST, and talked endlessly of how poor all other mechanics were and how cheaply airplanes were built today, Charlie said nothing at all. His hearing was marginal variable to poor, and, besides, he was making loud noises of his own with the blowgun, cleaning layered and pelleted dust off the chassis with compressed air. He blew in among the i.f. cans and tube shields, and went zippedy by the plates of the variable condenser a number of times from all directions. He even blew out the rat's nest underside of the chassis, too, though it was not dusty.

Done with blowing, Charlie wiped his hands on a dark pink rag and lighted a cigarette and waited for the mechanic. He waited no more than a minute, because the mechanic was a man

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who made a smug equation between the excellence of a piece of work and the slowness of its doing, and was only now at the drill press (with the arc of mistake-holes drilled in its own table), so Charlie, who bored easily, waited just that minute, then began stirring in the hell-box of used wire at the back of the bench, looking for a cord and plug in better condition than the stiff, dried brown one coming out of his radio. He found a round black rubber one, with a round black rubber plug, cut from a motor perhaps a long time ago when the motor was either thrown away for being burned out, or had been wired hard to the wall with conduit. He pulled the wire through his rag to dust it, then stole it. "Okay to use this here solder gun?"

The mechanic, Palmer, with his arm high on the drill press handle, looked at Charlie under his armpit and said, "(Sure, Charlie.) Solder's (there in the) coffee can."

For Charlie was a pilot, and pilots got what they needed or they went nasty, and the parentheses are because Charlie was fifty years old and slightly deaf, and heard only the important words of someone's talking to him, although he heard very well on the telephone, and from the overhead cabin speaker in the Apache, and, especially, from the big snug headphones.

When he had cut out the old cord and soldered in the new one, Charlie turned himself to a close study of the gears and clutches and buzzerwork of the clock on top of the chassis. He drew his pencil from the pocket of his blue drill uniform shirt and touched with it in the small machinery, pushing down springs and lifting them up, starting gears one way, then back, rehearsing ratchet actions, and in all ways trying to discover what was wrong with the damn thing, and how it ought to look when it was right. He stopped to find his close-glasses in the other pocket, then bent nearer. This Charlie's small dear face was a weathered assortment of knobs—two for the brows, two for the cheekbones, one for the nose, one for the chin, and one each for the round little muscles he chewed his gum with. There were several positions down his nose where his glasses fit equally well, and no place at all where they fit properly.

What was strong with the damn thing was this: it was old. Now of course Charlie's annoyance was not at its age but at its symptom of age: the alarm sound in the old days used to be strident and quick to begin—a regular calvinist rattle-awake and get-to-work

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—but now it was rather a wheeze and a groan, more like a sympathetic hum to a slugabed. Charlie's annoyance, then, was really at himself for his temptation to agree with it and roll over for a little more sleep.

He plugged his new cord into the power strip on the iron wall and turned on the alarm and, as it sounded feebly along, he poked about among the spring leaves and strikers until he found the place to push to make the noise young and loud again. An enfeebled spring, and a shiny worn place were once there had been a sharp new place, worked together *here* to cause the trouble. He entered the machinery with a pair of bent-nose pliers and urged a new curve into a spring leaf; the new sound was fresh and awful again.

Palmer by now had finished his dainty repair of the plastic case. Obsequious as a men's room attendant, he took clean toluol and a new rag and wiped off the remains of the Scotch tape, then polished it inside and out and presented it to Charlie. Inspecting, Charlie traced his fingertips down the two rows of tiny countersunk rivets, looked inside at the strip of aluminum that bridged the crack, and put out his little round lower lip as he nodded. At the end of the crack, where it died in whole material, Palmer had drilled a stop-hole, which is a theoretical hole put at the end of a real crack for hypothetical stress relief, to prevent the real crack from really continuing later. That the stop-hole *does not work* is irrelevant. It is a trick for wise instructors to teach their students in airframe and powerplant school, and for those students to brag with later to their tired and unsuspecting fathers; it is thus useful *ad hominem* if not *ad aluminum*. The crack goes on through the hole anyway, afterward, and for elegant, unanswerable proof of myth's power over mind you must seek out a really well-used old airplane and find a patched cowling or fairing crack, and there you will see toward the end of the crack a history of man's dogged will to believe with his heart what he cannot believe with his eyes: a series of four or five stop-holes in a line in the crack like beads on a string, each drilled a hundred flying hours and half an inch after the one before.

Charlie pointed to the stop-hole in his radio cabinet and laughed with scorn and shook his head slowly. When he had replaced the chassis in the cabinet and put back all the screws and knobs, he wound the new black rubber wire about it and tucked

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it under his arm and said, "Thanks a bunch, Palmer." "(Not at all,) Charlie. Any time."

Now, in the present, three years after Charlie Ralston impressed the mechanic Palmer to make an aircraft repair to his radio, the crack at that repair had gone just seven-eighths of an inch past the theoretical stop-hole, and the alarm sound had worn once more to a gurgle and hum, with false starts and quavery runs. To Charlie asleep, and in his sleep knowing the alarm ought to start about now, the tension of the waiting ruined his last half-hour's rest every morning. And, a new flaw of the instrument made it worse these days: the alarm lately could not be restrained (aborted, prevented) before it had in fact begun to sound. It went off at five-thirty on Sunday mornings for nothing just as it went off the other six to get Charlie up.

This one Sunday morning, however, Charlie did not much mind. He felt so bad, with his cold and his hangover and the excessive warmth of their small bedroom, that to add a futile struggle for sleep to all the rest would be simple psychic insult. When the clock in the radio made its first halting overture, clearing its throat, Charlie's hand flew above his head and swiped the lever down. He swore once in the restored quiet and squirmed himself north to the headboard and lay flat on his back with his head propped erect to study how he felt, and to compare how he felt now with the way he had felt one, two, three, and four mornings ago at this hour. (One of Charlie's few friends, an old-time pilot and literary man who knew everything worth remembering, a man gone now, God-rest-him-he-earned-it, this man, Kent Curtis, who hated doctors while he admired them, said that the cleverest doctor *he* knew had a fine way to bring any old lady or other valetudinarian swiftly to the point, and so clear the examination room gracefully for another ten-dollar guest, and that way was this: "Never ask her, 'How do you feel?' Always ask her, 'What is it about the way you feel that bothers you *most*?' ")

Charlie's cold had started simply, without threat, five days ago. He had noticed at five-thirty in the afternoon, toward sundown, for it was November, that his throat was dry. He was at the moment pushing on the blades of one propeller of the bulbous Apache while Palmer pushed on the other and together they were rolling the plane into the *big* hangar (so said to distinguish it

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from all the little *tee* hangars over in the hayfield) to store it for the night. If you fly twice in one day from Salisbury, Maryland to Newark, New Jersey and return, stopping each way at Princeton, Trenton, North Philadelphia, Wilmington, Easton, and Cambridge, and if you smoke a package and a half of strong menthol cigarettes on the way, then perhaps you *should* have a dry throat by evening. Besides the dry throat, however, was the slightly elevated feeling between the eyes that, for Charlie, was always prelusive to a cold. Immediately after supper that night—Tuesday night it was—Charlie made himself a Caracas Reamer, took three aspirins, and crawled in bed to read himself to sleep over the current *Airman's Information Manual.* (All right, he had learned of the Caracas Reamer when flying oil well logs in a Republic Seabee from Cumaná to El Tigre, Anzoátegui. It is a viscid, cloudy thing made of four ounces of whiskey, two tablespoons of honey, one teaspoon of fresh ground horseradish, the juice of one lime, and the rest boiling water. It is a military remedy for everything, confected both to cure real illness and to make sham illness less pleasant.)

He woke Wednesday well rested, with a dry, unproductive cough and a watering nose. He had fine clear weather all day, and routine flying.

Thursday he took with him three handkerchiefs and a box of Luden's cough drops, and used them all. That night he slept badly, waking with his own coughing, and using the times awake to blow his nose and throw the tissues angrily on the floor. Glorie beside him in the bed heaved herself up in her sleep occasionally and asked, "(All right,) baby?"

He replied softly with, "Ah, shit," so as not to wake her.

Friday's sky was covered with the high thready cirrus of the coming warm front. Visibility was still excellent, and Charlie flew mechanically, without pleasure. His headache by now had spread uniformly around his skull, his nose was entirely stopped, and his cough was deep, and hurt. He chewed his gum in the way he had invented that allowed him to crack his jaw forward frequently to open his Eustachian tubes without alarming his passengers. But he forgot himself between Easton and Cambridge; he popped open his little message window to let his spent gum suck out into the slipstream, and saw, by the jump of Mr. Plummer's legs, that the whistle and roar had scared the poor man

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badly. Here Charlie rose bravely above his sickness and for three minutes was pleasant and reassuring to Mr. Plummer, explaining that to open the little window in flight was not serious at all—was often in fact good fun—but the *door,* now *that* was another matter, very difficult to close if some silly passenger undid both the lock and the latch, now *there* was a noise! Mr. Plummer seemed willing, but evidently failed to see how knowledge of an enormous scare was to calm his merely large one. Mr. Plummer, however, did not speak clearly, and Charlie did not catch a word.

That night Charlie went to Dr. Pinder for a prescription of some kind, of any kind. Besides being Charlie's own doctor, he was also the Salisbury area's F.A.A. medical examiner. This is an appointment few doctors seek, so it must be assigned as a form of civic duty. The paperwork is long and the fee short, and the work is not the practice of medicine, which most doctors still prefer, but rather is a kind of dull quality-control instead. Pilots with Air Transport Ratings must hold First Class Medical Certificates, which last only six months and must be renewed on the evidence of another complete physical examination successfully passed. After Charlie's first such examination by the man four years before, the later ones were easy. At that first one, Dr. Pinder had stood behind Charlie ten feet off and whispered numbers. With intense concentration Charlie had caught half of them. "You don't whisper as loud as the man in Roanoke," he said. In annoyance he kept to himself, Charlie had wondered how a pilot with no pants on, with his asshole still tingling and greasy from the insult immediately before, could reasonably be expected to hear one goddam thing.

Dr. Pinder had come around in front of Charlie. "Nevertheless, (you're) marginal. (How many) hours d'you have?"

"A little over fourteen thousand."

"(Ah.) And all in those loud *little* planes, I'm sure." While Charlie struggled for one-legged balance and put on his pants, Dr. Pinder wrote flourishingly with a juicy black pen on his prescription pad. "Here. These drops may amuse you. The ethical-drug equivalent of snake-oil and mandrake root. Give you brief improvement of the hearing by loosening up the mechanism. May not work at all for you, but interesting, anyway."

So, was this charming man just simple? Or was he just very complex? If the magic drops could spare a medical examiner all

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the bother of preparing waiver applications, and if the pilot who used them only did so in honesty—that is, to pass the examination but not to fly with, since he heard quite well from the cabin speaker or his headphones—why, where's the damage?

Charlie's subsequent medical examinations, one each six months, were unremarkable except for the terrible echoing clatter and gabble in the doctor's office, and Charlie's own small-boy-in-the-cookies thrill.

New drops now, Friday night, specific for the cold in the nose, the sinuses, the ears, the throat, and the chest. At home with the small brown bottle, Charlie threw himself on the bed with his head hanging over and dropped the clear drops numerously up his little round nose into his brain. Eyes closed, motionless with reverent interest, Charlie marveled at each new licking tongue of fire as a swollen passage opened and sluiced its savings down into the back of his throat. When it was all too wonderfully much, he rolled over and spat greatly into the bed of tissues in the wastebasket. Squeaks and squeals ran in his head like happy mice. Glorie came in, big and suffused with kitchen steam, to see what all the quiet was about.

He was so pleased to taste his food again this night that he hardly minded the delicate valving sound that happened in his ears when he bit down.

By dawn the next morning, Saturday, everything was bad again with him, and the memory of last night's respite was high-order mockery. Glorie took his temperature and held the thermometer to the wan sunrise in the window and said, "Ninety-nine point two. (You) *are* a little sick."

"A *little* sick! Jesus. I shouldn' fly. I should call in sick. Shouldn' I? What's it look like out?"

"Overcast stratiform, high. (I can see the) radio tower."

"Can see it or can't?"

"Can. *Can* see it."

"That is just James Dandy." He sat up and put his feet on the floor and caught his head in his hands. "Oh, God. . . . Well, where's my shirt?"

"Put on a clean one, (baby). (It'll make you) feel better."

With the aid of aspirins and root beer he endured Saturday's two runs north and back. Whenever he drifted from his chosen altitude by as little as a hundred feet, he knew it at once in his

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ears. His climbs and descents were ever so gradual and extended, while his jaw worked every minute to crack his tubes. When he blew his nose he did it gently—too hard and those needles slid into his ears from the inside and made him cough. The product of his blowing and his coughing, inspected discreetly in the handkerchief held low in his left hand where the passengers could not see, was today fibrous and thick, a striated yellow-green.

On his last run south, he left Newark just ten minutes before the field weather went below VFR minimums, and he was mercifully excused the nuisance and delay of filing an instrument flight plan. All the way to Salisbury he bumped along under an eleven hundred foot overcast, joyfully watching the DME needle creep down from forty miles to thirty, to fifteen, to five, then there was the town below him, just putting on its street lights.

When he shuffled through the back door into the kitchen and saw Glorie grand in her most rigid corset and thin red silk robe open down the front, he was so glad to see her again he paid no attention to her getting-ready-to-go-out look, and rested his hot head on the hump of fat below the nape of her neck. He put his arms around her casings and bonings and felt the eyelets and laces and wales, up and down through the flimsy robe, and mumbled, "*Still* feels like a parachute pack. Let's see, now, here . . . there . . . where."

"Quit, baby. (In this rig) I can't. You got any bourbon for yourself?"

At once, Charlie saw on the kitchen counter before them Glorie's new fifth of vodka, and remembered with a dip and a rise that they were to be at the Pryors' house at seven.

"You too sick to go out, baby?"

"I may be dead first, but I'll make it. Besides, I know you. You'll go anyway, even if I'm dying here at home. I won't give you the satisfaction. I'll make it." He snapped her garter loudly, then steadied himself on the counter while he looked into the cabinet to check his bourbon bottle. He was pleased to see it was half full, because he was going to drink every drop.

In the bedroom he gave himself the fiery nose drops again and waited their due time with his head dangling. Then he rolled over and hawked and snuck and spat in the wastebasket until it hurt too much. He feebly undressed and feebly took a long hot shower. A little recruited afterward, he stood gnarled and wet in

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the steaming bathroom and took three aspirins with two long cold glasses of water. Then he dressed in soft wool clothes and put on an ascot, and was as good a man as he could make with the materials to hand.

At the Pryors', Glorie drank twice as much as he did and got only just as drunk, for she had body mass and a phlegmatic temper going for her, and the vodka was eighty proof against his bourbon's hundred. At a lull about midnight, Charlie yawned and complained about the burning in his eyes, so Glorie hoisted him out of his chair and steered him to the door and parked him there while she got their coats. When he was all bundled, and the four were having their open-door good nights in little spits of rain that blew in, Charlie managed an excellent feel of Myra Pryor's tender small ass out of sight while Bill, the jollybird, repeated loudly, "Thank God it's just a short stumble home for you folks! Thank God it's just a short stagger home for—"

"Oh Bill be quiet," Myra said, moving slightly away from Charlie, "Just let 'em go home."

So, Sunday morning at last, and the alarm had whimpered briefly before Charlie struck it to silence, and he lay now on his back with his head propped erect against the headboard, a very sick pilot with a hangover besides, and a very happy man who was not going to move again until he damn well felt like it. A slow inventory of his discomforts suggested it might be a long time. He was safe at home.

Because neither of them had thought to open a window last night, the room was very warm. Glorie had sometime thrown down her share of the covers and lay now exposed on her back with her great legs spread wide. Charlie shamelessly inspected her in the growing light. Her thin nightgown—such a fragile trifle to send on so major an errand—had worked itself north on her as usual during the night until it was stopped in corded twists by the alps of her breasts. Her suety belly lifted and fell with her long breathing; she was in her deepest sleep, when nothing known could wake her. It was pleasant and pacific to study her without the annoyance of being studied back. She was a dewy person—all right, sweatful—and the smell of her (would he ever smell again?) always transported him. After a warm night's vaporing of her sweet vodka in her sleep, there were about her a hundred pockets of scent, crannies of still love-wind, hidden in the sheets

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and waiting in her armpits and under her shoulders and in the hollow of her neck for release at her smallest movement.

Charlie liked the fatness of her simply, without a thought for the American standard of skinny beauty; he was there to tell all the kids they didn't know what they were missing till they had a proper fat woman. When, for example, you were on it but not in it, you could bear all your weight on her but your toes, with your thumbs hooked together behind your back as if you were body-surfing, and just by little goes of your toes on the sheet ride north and south, north and south a couple of wonderful inches and forever if you wanted.

In the way we have of feeling things without ever thinking them formally, Charlie was curious why Sunday morning never failed, while other times in the week it was maybe, and you weren't sure it was going to work, and you better be cautious because you certainly don't want to get something as big as Glorie going without you're sure you're going yourself, you bet, but Sunday mornings never failed, and it was especially remarkable because he usually felt pretty dody on Sunday mornings—less than his fittest—and yet that was when it was best. Likewise feeling without thinking here now this gray sick minute, Glorie girl, what's the best to do with this piss-hard—use it as it is and go over quick, too quick for Glorie, or go leak and so leaking lose it and wonder if it will come back or was it all a false promise invented to mock a very sick pilot?

And, of course, she would not wake up during it, really; the tip of her tongue would show sometime and that meant one thing, and her shoulders would stir and that meant another, and then and not too long later, either, those knees would move and undimple and spread, and the great white thighs cobbled with blue veins would come up with all the ponder and purpose of the rising of a double bascule drawbridge, and *there you were.*

Charlie reached over and covered with his hand the hard dent of her hysterectomy scar, and the telephone rang.

"Hullo." It was long distance.

"Good morning, there, Charlie! I get you up?"

"No. Go ahead."

"Charlie, we've got a problem. Just had a call from Pastor. He's weathered in down at Richmond in the Comanche, and can't get out till who knows how long."

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"No, Parker," Charlie said.

Parker did not hear, or did not notice, or heard and noticed and ignored that. "So I wonder if you'd mind taking a little charter this morning? Your Mr. Proxmer and his wife down there have got to get to a wedding at eleven up here in Wilmington."

"This is Sunday, Parker."

"That I know. I thought it was pretty bad taste myself, having a wedding on Sunday. But maybe it's a Jewish wedding."

"Where's Porter?"

"He's in Buffalo on a charter. Also weathered in."

"I love the way you think, Parker," Charlie said, rubbing the sore glands below his jaw muscles. "I love the way you run your business, I really do. You figure you have instrument weather only twenty percent of the time, so out of five pilots you only hire one with an instrument rating. Brilliant logic."

"You know that's not the way it is, Charlie."

"It's the way I see it from here in Salisbury."

"Now look, Charlie, we can talk policy here all day, but I'll be glad to sit down with you when you get up here, and we'll go over it—"

"Horseshit."

"—but the fact remains that Mr. Proxmer is a very big account, with all those chicks and fertile eggs we move, and the only reason he doesn't have his own plane and his own pilot is because we give service."

"Parker, d'you know how many hours' service I've given this week? I've flown six days ten hours a day—sixty hours."

"Yes, sir. And I worked up your time card last night, and you grossed three hundred dollars. Not bad, is it?"

"It's not the money. I'm tired is all."

"Tired? Well, what time'd you get to bed?"

"Oh God, Daddy, *quit*. The answer is no."

"It's only about two hours round trip. Double time."

"The answer is still no. I'm sick."

"You mean that cold? That little runny nose?"

"I shouldn't fly. F.A.R.'s have a special section about people who fly when they're on medication, or when they're sick. Go read it. It's all there."

"I'm aware of it. Do you have epilepsy or heart disease or faint-

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ing spells? Are you going into insulin shock this morning? Are you a known psychotic? Come *on*."

"Parker, I've got a goddam bad cold. The answer is no." Then Charlie hung up. He sat on the edge of the bed with his head down and his hands dangling between his knees.

"(Hey, baby.)"

Charlie started and looked at Glorie. Her eyes were by miracle open—open and staring at the ceiling. A small and pointed smile moved in her great fat face. Her hand slid to him and found the small of his back and crept around him and paused to pat the place where the piss-hard had been and went on to his arm and wrist and hand and squeezed it with love and liking, then she went to sleep again instantly.

Charlie swallowed, and the swallow hurt his ears equally. He tried to crack his tubes and got nothing. "Well, *shit!*" he whispered, and tears filled his eyes. Dragging his old wool robe behind him, he felt his way to the kitchen, where his phoning could not disturb Glorie. He sat at the table there and worked the heels of his hands in his eyes, then called a Salisbury number.

"F.A.A. Flight Service; Player."

Charlie spoke low: "Hey, Andy; Charlie Ralston. What've I got between here and Wilmington this forenoon?"

"Okay. Stand by one." While the line was dead, Charlie pulled a pad and pencil to him and bravely lighted a cigarette. It tasted like so much warm air, as if there were a hole in it somewhere. Then Player opened his line again: "All right. We had a weak warm front passage just after midnight. It's now hanging in on a northeast-southwest line through Cape Charles. Present weather, Wilmington. Wilmington, ceiling broken variable to overcast, six hundred; layers above; tops five thousand; visibility one and one half in light rain, fog. Temperature four five, dew point four one; wind zero four zero degrees at eight. Altimeter two nine point seven six. Salisbury. Salisbury, nine hundred overcast; tops unknown; visibility two in light rain, fog. Temperature five zero, dew point four six; wind zero three zero degrees at six. Altimeter two nine point seven one."

The weather just wasn't bad enough. Charlie's cigarette was so long it broke in half when he stubbed it out. "Winds aloft at three and five? Freezing level?"

"Winds aloft in the Salisbury area; three thousand, zero five

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zero at one five; five thousand, zero six zero at two zero knots. Lemme see here. . . . There's no freezing level on the sequence, so it must be above the tops."

Charlie tried to crack his tubes and got nothing. The feeling was similar to the one you had when you lost your lure and part of your line while trolling, or when you kept trying hopefully to wind your watch, but the spring was broken and the stem wheel just turned loosely in your fingers, or when the handle of something broke off light in your hand. "What's your area forecast look like?"

"This is old weather. The new one isn't due in for a couple hours. Let's see here. . . . Looks like it's going to be about the same all day. The front's pretty well stalled down there. You want to file now?"

"I do *not* want to file now. I may check back."

"Your aircraft number, that's Four Three Zero Eight Yank, ain't it?"

"Yes."

"I may forget a face but I never forget a number."

"Goodbye." Charlie put the phone down and rubbed the knobs of his face with both hands. *Why couldn't the weather be really bad?* He got up and pulled his robe about him and put water on to boil for instant coffee. He found the aspirin in the spice rack and took four—two for the cold and two for the hangover. Then he went back to the phone and dialed a long number.

"Coastal Airways, *good* morning."

(Parker, the smooth son of a bitch, could speak from the depths of his bed at any hour of the night or dawning with the same brisk cheer he radiated in his uniform behind the counter. And the smooth son of a bitch always wore that uniform, even though he never flew. He believed it made the company staff look more numerous.)

Charlie said, "What time did Proxmer want to go?"

"*There* you are, Charlie! You always get us out of a hole. They'll be at the airport at eight."

"You know, if that rich bastard was to start *driving* up there right now, he'd make his little wedding in plenty of time. And I could go back to bed."

"Ours not to reason why, old buddy."

"Don't old buddy me. I'm not flying tomorrow."

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"We'll work something out, Charlie boy."

"*You* work something out. It's all worked out on my end."

Charlie unlocked the hangar doors at seven, then turned and leaned against them to rest and gather himself for the work of forcing them open. It was just that moment between dawn and day when electric light outdoors suddenly turns weak and yellow, and when the flat night-shapes some way off get their different distances back. He could just see through the fine rain the inverted-ice-cream-cone-on-a-plate shape of the omni transmitter on the far side of the field. Humble little structure, modest and quiet, almost comic in orange and white, but how constant a friend! A large cold drop of water fell from the high eave to the shoulder of his coat and broke there and sprayed the side of his face. He closed his eyes and turned to the doors.

Twenty feet high and five hundred pounds apiece and very rarely greased they were, and harder to move than even the 3,000 pound airplane. Even when he was feeling fit. Charlie worked his fingers into the crack at the height of his belt, and pulled on the easier door. It slid three inches and stopped. He turned away and bent over and put his hands on his knees to cough. He let the coarse phlegm drop straight to the wet concrete, for he had no energy to spit it away. At the doors again, he put his elbows high and locked his hands in the slot before his face and strained the doors apart to a foot. He rested in the gap for a time, then slipped into the dim hangar to get the nosewheel towbar from the floor before the Apache. This he used as a ratchet lever to urge the doors past the stiff places. He was breathing hard and his heart was tumbling in his chest when at last he made forty feet of opening to clear the Apache's wingtips.

He went into the office and sat at the desk to rest. He still had the plane to pull out all alone. Thank God that was a little downhill. When his panting and his heart had slowed somewhat, he turned on the light and wrote his flight plan on a used envelope. Then he used his personal key to the machine and opened the door and stole a root beer. When he called Salisbury Flight Service, Andy Player answered as before.

"Hey, Andy. Charlie Ralston."

"Hey."

"I guess I'll file now. You ready to copy?"

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"Yeah, go ahead."

"I.F.R. November Four Three Zero Eight Yankee. Piper PA-23 dash one sixty slash delta. Red and white, black trim. Salisbury to Newcastle County Airport, Wilmington via direct, tunnel clearance, three thousand feet all the way. Estimating off at zero eight ten local. Time en route fifty minutes, four hours fuel on board, souls three. Pilot's name Ralston, address on file Salisbury."

"And your alternate?"

"Hell, make it Salisbury. If I can't get in I'll come home." Charlie worked his jaw back and forth, and got only a sticky sound.

"You want this hour weather at Wilmington?"

"Go ahead."

"Says Wilmington. Wilmington, indefinite ceiling six to eight hundred; visibility one, light rain, fog, smoke. Temperature four eight, dew point four four; wind zero three zero at five. Altimeter two nine point seven seven, rising slowly."

"Okay. I'll call you for clearance from out on the runway." After he put the phone down, Charlie finished his root beer and went back into the hangar. At each engine he opened the little flap-door in the top of the cowling and checked the oil level. He ran his fingertips along both leading edges of the propeller to be sure the nicks were no worse, then pulled it through one full turn and listened to the magneto snap. At each movement of his head his brain seemed to wash up against the inside of his skull. When he squatted under the nacelle to drain the breather sump and the fuel strainer, the pressure made his pulse beat in his eyeballs. As he went from one engine to the other, he looked at the three tires and kicked the nose gear to see if its oil strut was still weeping. It was. The scissors closed a quarter of an inch. Put that on the maintenance list. He opened each of the four fuel fill doors in the top of the wings and unsnapped the squeeze-corks and put his finger in the cold gasoline. By the trailing edge of the wing he moved the aileron up and down slowly, stop-to-stop. At the tail he wiggled all the movable surfaces and examined the small crack he knew of at an edge rivet in the left elevator. The rivet was loose in the hole, but the crack had not grown any. That was already on the maintenance list, and the puddinghead mechanic, Palmer, would definitely drill a stop-hole there, no matter what.

It was now seven forty-five and no longer possible to delay

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hauling the plane outdoors, never mind how weak he was, and sick, and full of simple hate. He hooked the red towbar into the two holes in the nosewheel forging and pulled once to be sure the brakes were unlocked. The plane oozed forward an inch, then went back to where it had been, and damn these nylon cord tires with their overnight flat spots. He held his breath and closed his eyes hard and heaved again and the plane slowly moved to him. Bright scintillas whirled in his eyes, brighter than anything else in this wet gray morning world. Past the door tracks, out in the thin rain, the plane felt the slight pitch of the concrete apron and began to roll by itself. Charlie stumbled and caught himself and his brain washed around in his head.

When the tail was clear of the hangar opening, Charlie pulled the towbar sharply sideways, steering the rolling plane in a quarter-turn out of habit, not thinking that there was now no dust on the apron to be blown back into the hangar by his propellers if he didn't.

Charlie disengaged the towbar and carried it with him around the right wingtip and, in a peevishness he never took out on the equipment, scaled it clattering and ringing back into the hangar across the concrete floor. Step-and-handle, he hauled himself onto the wingwalk by the cabin and opened the door and let himself down across the right seat into the left. Rain was already standing in bright drops on the windshield. Almost at once his body vapor began to condense in dew on every hard thing in the cockpit. Even the leather seat next to him felt moist under his hand. And for him to get up out of a warm wife for this! He blew his nose long and cautiously, with a tight sound of viscous bubbling. With his eyes shut he wiped his sore nose, then let his air out in a slow gasp.

When he put his handkerchief away now, he was ready for business. Henceforward, his movements were ordered ritual, but ritual different from most in that he thought about everything he did. In this very order: He stepped hard on the toe brakes and, holding pressure, pulled out the little chrome T-handle to lock them. After ascertaining that all radios and electrical equipment were off, he snapped up the heavy master switch beside his right calf. Three green lights like little eyes came on near it, the gear-down-and-locked lights. He put three fingertips of his right hand on the three lights (a) to be sure none was loose in its socket and waiting to scare him by going out and (b) because on bright days

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when the sun fell wrong into the cockpit they were often hard to see, and to be sure they were all burning you looked at the green glow on your finger-tips. While he waited for the fuel gauge needles to come up and steady, he wound the panel clock and corrected its setting. He also wound the stopwatch mounted in the center of his control wheel. The main tanks showed three-quarters full. Working on the low console between the seats, he switched from the mains to the auxiliaries. The needles moved up to bung-full. He switched back to the mains.

Now he turned on the left-engine fuel pump and listened intently; it ticked rapidly until pressure was up, then slowed to a metronomic keeping-beat. He tapped the glass of the left fuel pressure gauge (the one that always stuck) and the needle jumped up into the green arc. When he turned on the right-engine fuel pump, its needle came up without help. Working on the fuel console again, he turned on the emergency crossfeed, then reached forward and down and opened the crossfeed sump drain. Both fuel pressure needles dropped. When he closed the drain both needles rose again. He closed the crossfeed valve.

He moved both mixture control levers to full rich with his right hand, and, with his left on the switch line under the panel, snapped on all four magneto switches. Remembering he had started the right engine first last time yesterday, he unlocked the piston of the left primer and pumped down three times. He relocked the primer, pulling up on it to make sure, then cracked the left throttle a quarter-inch and kept his right hand on it. He looked about outside the plane for deer or dogs, men or children, and found no one. With his left hand he pulled out the handle of the safety-patent starter switch and held it over left. The bendix engaged with a jolt and the left propeller swung over with halts and goes, then the spinner bucked and the engine started and the propeller faded from sight in speed. He ran it up to 1500 r.p.m. on the tachometer and watched the left oil pressure gauge. In a long time—fifteen seconds—it lifted off the pin and moved into the green.

He started the right engine exactly the same way, except that it required two pumps of the throttle while cranking to catch. When right-engine oil pressure was up he turned off both electric fuel pumps to verify that the mechanical pumps on the engines themselves held the pressure.

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Now he ran the left engine up to 2200 r.p.m. and left it there while he: (a) grounded each of its magnetos and noted the slight turns loss, (b) pulled the left propeller pitch control slowly back until he felt the feathering detent stop, then pulled it quickly the rest of the way, past the stop, listened for the struggling, washing sound of the propeller trying to feather, heard it (and felt the shake of the airplane) and instantly pushed the propeller control all the way forward again, (c) pulled the left mixture control back toward lean until the engine starved and lost all power, then pushed it to full rich again to restore it, (d) turned the vacuum gauge selector to the left pump and noted the correct inches reading, (e) reached down and to the right and turned off both generator switches, then turned the left one back on and watched the little jump of the ammeter. Then he turned the right one back on also.

He pulled the left throttle back to let that engine idle at 800 r.p.m., and went through the same ritual with the right engine.

Satisfied with that one too, he advanced both throttles to 1500 r.p.m. to set the generators charging, and turned on all his radios. While he waited for them to warm up, he used the time to cycle the wing flaps to full down and full up again, testing hydraulic service. The flap position indicator on the instrument panel did not work, had not worked in a long time, and, in Charlie's opinion, was unnecessary anyhow. If you were too goddam lazy to turn your head and look out the window to watch the flaps move down in person, then . . . then . . . well, then you were pretty goddam lazy.

He turned both transmitters to 122.1 megacycles (unless otherwise noted, all frequencies are in megacycles and decimal parts thereof) and both receivers to 122.2. "Salisbury Radio, Salisbury Radio, Apache Four Three Zero Eight Yank, transmitter check. How do you read Transmitter One? One two three four five, five four three two one, over."

"Zero Eight Yank, Salisbury, five square."

Charlie flicked a tiny switch down. "Salisbury, Zero Eight Yank; Number Two. One two three four five, five four three two one, over."

"Also five square."

"Zero Eight Yank, roger, thank you."

Charlie's microphone was his especial delight. From a little

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black cartridge held to his left temple by a spring headband a black tube no larger than a bit of spaghetti curved down along his cheek to the left corner of his mouth. A tiny red button under his left thumb on the control wheel turned it on. The moment he had seen it advertised in a flying journal, he knew he must have it, not because it was "used by every astronaut in the U. S. space program" but because when you are on a wet instrument approach and the controller tells you to report at the middle marker and your lap is full of approach plates and a computer and a pad of paper and God knows what all else, and one hand is on the throttles and the other is holding the wheel in slippery sweat, why, that is the very moment the normal hand-held microphone chooses to dive from your lap to the floor and roll back under the seat out of sight. Charlie had looked past the price and ordered it immediately. When the bill for sixty dollars reached Parker in Wilmington, there were howls of pain and rage up there, and that was the other reason Charlie liked his microphone.

Now he tuned both omni receivers to 114.5, zeroed both course needles, and read the bearings. One was 118° and the other 120°, and the known bearing from the hangar was 121°, so his omnis were quite close enough, and he turned off the VHF equipment.

He turned the automatic direction finder to a local broadcast station and listened to broiler prices until the bearing needle crawled around and pointed to Salisbury, then he turned that off.

He checked the DME on both long and short range, found it locking properly at about a mile, and turned that off too.

To stop the engines he pulled both mixture levers into the idle-cutoff position and starved them out. When the propellers stopped turning, he flipped every switch on the panel to *Off*.

Had any of the equipment failed any one of the tests just imposed on it, Charlie would have grounded the plane in good conscience and gone home to bed.

It was five minutes of eight. He unwrapped a cough drop—one of the doped kind that made his tongue go to sleep—and put it in his cheek. He wormed out of his uniform coat and rolled it into a ball for a pillow, then pulled the handle that let his seat tilt back. He lay with his eyes closed listening to the rain tick on the cabin roof, and quickly went to sleep.

He was awakened ten minutes later by a rapping on the door. The plane lurched, and Mr. Proxmer's face, square and ruddy

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and grinning gaily, appeared in the window. "(Caught you that time!)" he snickered.

Charlie opened the door and put on a grin himself, though it was expensive. (Even when he was feeling fine, even on a weekday, Proxmer was a pain in the right seat. The man had washed out of cadets in Texas back in 1942, but by some nearly magical process, like that which results in mushrooms, aerophytes, or cancer, his small and uncertain knowledge of flying had bloated to astonishing size. At first, when Charlie did not know Proxmer well, he assumed the man must have been a B-17 pilot in England, or one of Chennault's Flying Tigers. That lasted until Proxmer had asked him of the Apache, "What'll she do going downwind?" Proxmer liked to hold the wheel and look serious and squint about looking for . . . for Zeros, perhaps, or maybe Messerschmitts.) "Good morning, Mr. Proxmer. You have any baggage?"

"(Just) this (little thing). (Here, you can just dump it on the) seat behind you."

Charlie received the case, then arranged the right seat beside him so that Mrs. Proxmer, a thin, stern-looking woman with darting eyes, could climb behind it to her own seat. When he saw her fooling purposefully with the seat belt, he dismissed her from his attention and slid the right seat back for Proxmer, who landed heavily in it after knocking the right control wheel with his knee. Proxmer exhaled loudly, buckled his belt, and planted both feet rigidly on the rudder pedals. He asked, "(What's the weather up in Wilmington?)"

Charlie, who was busy arranging charts and approach plates and scratch paper on his lap desk, missed the entire question. When he reached across Proxmer to slam, latch, and lock the door, however, he saw in the side of his eye an expression on Proxmer's face that notified him. "Sorry," Charlie said. "What was that?"

"(I say,) what's the weather up in Wilmington?"

Charlie shrugged. "Not too bad."

"(We going to) file instruments?"

"Already have."

"Great!"

Charlie started the engines, stepped on the toe brakes to release them, wiggled the pedals rapidly to get Proxmer's feet off

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the right set, and let the plane roll toward the taxiway while the radios warmed up. He tried to blow his nose, but nothing got through, not even wind. This, he thought, is going to be zero fun at all. He tucked the handkerchief down between the wall and his seat.

Proxmer tapped his arm. "You don't look so good," he said loudly. "You feel all right?"

"I feel terrible. Can't shake this cold."

Proxmer nodded in sober sympathy, then said earnestly, "Well, I can take over for you any time you say."

Charlie let none of his feelings show in his face. "Thanks." Now, if the man will just kindly keep his head closed and let me alone for an hour, and please to not make some smart remark right in the middle of radio traffic; then I'll not lose my temper at this very important account. "Salisbury Radio, Zero Eight Yank."

"Zero Eight Yank, Salisbury."

"We're down here by the gas pumps, ready to copy."

"Stand by one."

Charlie used the pause to turn his head away from Proxmer and privately pinch his nose shut and alternately suck and press air in his mouth in one more effort to break the impaction of his Eustachian tubes. There was no result; everything in his head felt like tough rubber.

"Zero Eight Yank, Salisbury, clearance. 'ATC clears November Four Three Zero Eight Yankee to the Ridgley intersection via Victor Two Nine. Climb to and maintain three thousand immediately after takeoff. Contact New York Center as soon as possible on 124.2; if unable, 126.0. Guard Salisbury Radio this frequency until you have Center contact. Expect further clearance at or before Ridgley. Report passing two thousand and reaching three.' Over."

Charlie finished a two-line scrawl of symbols on the pad in his lap. They didn't give me direct, he thought, but, on the other hand, they didn't send me 'way the hell up in the air, either. He opened his microphone and said, "Okay. Zero Eight Yank's cleared to Ridgley via Victor Two Nine. Climb, maintain three. New York Center *asap* on 124.2 or 126.0. We'll guard Salisbury this frequency till we get 'em. Expect further clearance Ridgley or before, and we'll report passing two and reaching three, over."

"Clearance correct. Salisbury field advisory, Salisbury, wind

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zero two zero degrees, six, favoring Runway Four. No reported or observed local traffic. Altimeter two nine point seven zero, time one three. Report when airborne."

While setting the altimeter and readjusting the clock half a minute, Charlie said, "Roger."

Proxmer said, "(Gosh, I still don't see how you get all that so quickly and never miss a thing.)"

Charlie rubbed clear places in the fog of the windshield and the window beside him, and released the brakes. Though his forward vision was poor because of the standing raindrops, he could see quite enough from his side window by fishtailing the plane on the taxiway. During one of these lateral movements, he watched the artificial horizon for movement of its bar. Properly, there was none. He reached down and to the right, moved Proxmer's knee out of the way, and turned on the rotating beacon. Whenever it was necessary to take the plane through a puddle, he slowed it to a walk to avoid soaking the brakes and the gear wells.

At the runup block Charlie angled the plane so he could see both the landing track and the takeoff area. This was habit again; on fine days almost anything could be expected to barge into the airport traffic zone without making the customary radio contact, but on a foul day like this only serious people were in the air, and they used their radios. He set the brakes for time to finish the last items. He caged the directional gyro and turned its card to the runway heading, set one omni to the outbound course and the other to the intersection bearing defining Ridgley, ran up each engine briefly for a last magneto check, adjusted the trim tab crank overhead to neutral, felt of the door handle and lock, looked at Mr. and Mrs. Proxmer's seat belts and his own, felt of each fuel selector valve, turned on the electric fuel pumps, moved the control wheel through its full range left and right, forward and back, examined all the gray sky he could see, and released the brakes.

Takeoff run, liftoff, gear retraction, and climbout were elegant and routine. While waiting for the landing gear to lock up and light the little yellow light, Charlie said, "Salisbury, Zero Eight Yank is off at one nine," and wrote it down on his pad.

"Roger, Zero Eight Yank. Good day."

Charlie's time of seeing was very brief; hardly had the wind blown the raindrops off the windshield before the plane was in

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the cloud. The instant of penetration is always remarkable; you are climbing fast at solid-looking dark stuff, and with one flip you are in it and all sense of speed is gone, and everything becomes time: time of turn, time of next fix, rate of climb, time to report, and time again to scan the whole panel. And in all this your wingtips are out there dim and far away, as if they were under water.

The subtly-growing pressure in Charlie's ears became a small pain at eleven hundred feet. At thirteen hundred the pain was greater, but not severe. He held the wheel forward for a short time to stop the climb and wait for something to happen in his head. He was rewarded. There was a sensation of easing movement somewhere behind his jaws, and thick mucus arrived in his throat by itself, without being called for. He put it in his handkerchief gratefully, and let the plane resume its climb.

He tried at one thousand feet and fifteen hundred to raise New York Center, without success, so he reported his transit of two thousand to Salisbury behind him. At two thousand five hundred, New York Center answered in a faint and scratchy voice, "Go ahead, Zero Eight Yank."

Charlie turned up the volume and said, "Center, Zero Eight Yank was off Salisbury at one nine. We're passing twenty-six hundred now, will report three thousand."

"Roger, Zero Eight Yank," Center said in a fresh, louder voice.

Approaching his assigned altitude, Charlie pulled the power back on both engines and cranked in down-trim as the level-flight airspeed built up. According to the omni needle, they were a little left of course by now, so he corrected ten degrees to the right and engaged the autopilot to give himself the leisure to play with the engines. Watching the exhaust temperature gauge, he leaned each engine to peak the needle, then enriched it twenty-five degrees. With the propeller controls both in his right hand, he twisted his wrist in little urges until the rolling beat of the engines joined into one sound. Finally, he tested each engine for internal icing with the carburetor heat controls. All fine. The plane, he reflected, was in one hell of a lot better tune than he was. But then, he knew a great deal more about the insides of the plane than he did about the insides of his own head. He disengaged the autopilot and flew the plane himself. "New York Center, Apache Zero Eight Yank is level at three. Estimating Ridgley at, um, at four nine."

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"Roger, Zero Eight Yank. We'll have further clearance for you shortly." The controller's voice was crisp and loud—Charlie's good friend in the little black box.

The rudder pedals wiggled; Proxmer was calling for his attention. "(I'll) take her for a while now."

In this stuff? Sweet Jesus. Charlie looked closely at the man, then said, "Maintain altitude and airspeed and keep the wings level," then lifted both hands from the wheel in a plain gesture of release.

Proxmer lost control sooner than Charlie expected. Almost at once, airspeed climbed from 130 knots to 155, altitude dropped two hundred feet, and the turn needle settled hard on the right pin. When Charlie was sure the graveyard spiral was well established, and that Proxmer was unable to do anything about it, he pulled power off the engines, leveled the wings, and swooped the plane back up to three thousand feet. The expression on Proxmer's face before Charlie saved him was pleasant to remember. In his rigidity and pallor, Proxmer looked like a man going over the falls on a raft, trying to steer with a broom. Charlie spit again into his handkerchief.

Proxmer said, "(Well, she wasn't trimmed up right when you gave her to me.)"

"Zero Eight Yank, New York."

"Go ahead, New York."

"Further clearance. Zero Eight Yank is cleared to Newcastle County Airport via Victor Two Nine. Climb to and maintain—"

Proxmer's wife had leaned forward to talk in her husband's ear, and now Proxmer tapped Charlie's shoulder. Charlie started and turned. Proxmer jabbed his finger at the cabin speaker overhead. "(Can we) turn that down? (Mrs. Proxmer says) it hurts her ears, it's so loud."

Without a comment or nod, Charlie rapidly plugged his headphones into the panel jack, flipped two little switches down, and said, "Sorry, New York, we just had a little cockpit confusion. Will you say again all after, 'Climb to and maintain'?"

"Roger, sir. Climb to and maintain seven thousand now. Contact Newcastle Approach Control on 125.0 passing Blackbird."

Seven thousand.

Charlie repeated the clearance correctly, then turned his head away from Proxmer and said, "Hey, New York, we've got a couple

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of old folks up here that can't stand altitude changes. Can you revise me to maintain three all the way?"

"Negative, Zero Eight Yank, negative. Traffic is Charlie One-Thirties in team instrument procedures at Dover Air Force Base."

"New York, I'll no sooner get up there than I'll have to come right down again. What about two thousand? That's above M.E.A.'s."

"Sorry, Zero Eight Yank. We'd lose you on radar that low. We can clear you immediately back to Salisbury, if you want."

"No, no. . . . We'll take it."

"Roger, Zero Eight Yank. Please begin your climb now. Report passing five."

"Zero Eight Yank, roger." Charlie licked his lips. Report passing five? I'll report passing *out* at five, that's what. And coming down's going to be one hell of a lot worse. I told that faggot Parker I shouldn't fly.

Mixtures to full rich, throttles to climb power, and ears oozing mucus into his mouth.

"(What're we doing?)" Proxmer asked. After a moment he tapped Charlie's shoulder, and Charlie lifted the headphone cup off his right ear. "(What're we) *doing?*"

"Center says go up, we go up." Proxmer rolled his eyes at the stupidity of Center, and fell back in his seat. Charlie added conversationally, "I'm going to be a little too busy to talk from now on, Mr. Proxmer," and let the headphone down in place.

Each time the pain in his ears increased to a level that would have made him wince if he had not had passengers, he was saved by the sluggish, reluctant opening of his canals and the arrival of mucus in his mouth. All the cavities of his head were now active in the noisy, distracting business of oozing and bubbling, squealing and squeaking. He got rid of such a large mouthful at five thousand feet that he had to begin another handkerchief before he could call Center intelligibly to report.

They broke out of the overcast into bright sunlight at fifty-five hundred feet, and Mr. and Mrs. Proxmer agreed on the beauty of the white plain laid out below them, and also agreed without saying a word about it that it was very nice to be up out of those clouds to where you could *see* again.

Charlie leveled off briefly just above the cloud deck and considered the possibility of canceling his instrument flight plan here and refiling it over Wilmington for the descent through the over-

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cast. But controllers dislike antics like that, and he might find himself flying circles over Wilmington for an hour before he got a new clearance. He then considered simply cheating—staying where he was at fifty-six hundred while claiming to be at seven thousand. He looked about. Directly ahead at three miles were two C-130's close together at his own altitude. He continued his climb.

Level at seven thousand feet, Charlie reported his time over Kenton omni, and was told for his courtesy, "Omit position reports; you're in radar contact."

Here in this clear, cold air, Charlie felt a little better. He even lighted a cigarette. The Proxmers were looking out the windows. Mr. Proxmer did not ask to take the wheel again.

Charlie finished all his remaining arithmetic—estimates for Blackbird and the Newcastle outer marker—then, with the forethought of an anxious man, he turned the omni receiver not in use to 110.3, the ILS localizer frequency at Newcastle—the blade-like beam he would follow to the landing runway—and on the ADF receiver he tuned across until he found the • • •—• • of the Newcastle outer marker at 248 kilocycles. All his equipment was now as ready as he could make it.

When the DME read eleven miles past Kenton omni, Charlie changed a transmitter to 125.0 and said, "Newcastle Approach Control, Apache Four Three Zero Eight Yankee."

"Zero Eight Yank, Newcastle Approach."

"Newcastle, Zero Eight Yank is by Blackbird at one zero; seven thousand; instruments to Newcastle."

"Roger your position, Zero Eight Yank. Descend, maintain two thousand. Expect a straight-in ILS approach, Runway One. What's your outer marker estimate?"

"Zero Eight Yank's leaving seven for two. Estimating the outer marker at two zero. Correction, make that one nine."

"Roger, Zero Eight Yank. Report ten DME out. Newcastle altimeter, two nine point seven eight."

"Okay, we'll report ten DME out." Charlie switched the DME to 114.0, the Newcastle vortac frequency. The needle climbed and fell, climbed and fell, climbed and stuck at sixteen miles. He pushed the mixture controls to full rich, retarded the throttles to fifteen inches of manifold pressure, and stared down at the gloss of sweat in his hand. *Get a man up to seven thousand feet for the*

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convenience of the Air Force, and hold him up there eleven miles longer than necessary, then pull the cork on him like this and expect him to go downstairs two at a time without complaints from the cargo. To get where he wanted to be when he wanted to be there, he must descend at nearly eight hundred feet a minute. He made the jaw motion of cracking his tubes, with no result.

When the rate of descent settled at only 600 f.p.m., Charlie pulled still more power off the engines and trimmed the nose up; the rate increased to 750. The pain that began in his ears grew smoothly in both intensity and area. When it reached up into his mid-head, and down into the cords of his throat, Charlie intelligently went entirely on instruments even though they had not yet fallen into the clouds. Any other traffic up here, VFR, would just have to look out for itself. The transition from visual to instrument disciplines can be disturbing if unexpected; with the freight of pain he carried now, a disturbance that might in other times have been minor was now a serious threat.

Charlie did not notice their plunge into the clouds until the light faded to gray. He held the wheel with both hands and hunched toward the instrument panel squinting and blinking and working his jaw carefully in the bracket of pain.

At three thousand feet, at the moment he was on the verge of aborting the approach and climbing back up to where there was no pain, he was slammed in the head twice within seconds by explosions straight from hell. His eyes fell closed and his head hung and his hands uncurled from the wheel, and he was filled with love.

Almost at once, Proxmer's wild wringing of the control wheel brought Charlie back. *"(What's wrong? What's wrong?)"*

Charlie opened his yellowed eyes and found Proxmer and gave him a slow grin. He took his wheel again and breathed deeply and leaned toward him and said, "I was just testing you." His voice was a meaningless buzz in his own head. Where the pain had been there was now only a flooding, comforting warmth and the precious gift of utter silence.

This episode, this comma in the flow of all their lives, had been so short that the plane had hardly noticed. Still on course, wings still level, descent rate just the same—everything on the panel was innocent and normal. In Charlie's large and private silence now, however, the little hum of fear that had flown with him every

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hour for more than thirty years was for the first time really plain. It did not increase, of course, for Charlie was a long time past the age of panic, but it was very clear; it was good to meet face to face this hum, this tincture, this little gentleman who'd kept him alive all this time.

Charlie cleared his throat to be on the safe side, and said, "Hey, there, Newcastle Approach, Zero Eight Yank. We're eleven DME out and passing twenty-five hundred now. We've got a little radio trouble, I think. Would you give me a short count, please?"

"(Roger, Zero Eight Yank. One two three four five. Five four three two one.)"

With the volume turned up high, Charlie felt a tickle in his ears at each number, and the cadence was the same as it had always been. "Okay, Newcastle, here's the sketch. I think I'm getting out to you okay, because I show modulation here, but all my audio's dead." He turned his head away from Proxmer. "So we'll just declare us an emergency here if it's okay with you. . . . I think I'll stay on this frequency instead of 121.5, so's everybody else'll get the picture. We're nine DME out now, at two thousand. We're on the localizer extended. Here's what we'll do, if you want to copy. We'll leave two for sixteen hundred now and bore on in to the outer marker. You get that? Try me again."

"(Roger, Zero Eight Yank. We're copying.)"

Tickle.

"Okay. I got a little noise then but that's all. We're seven DME out at sixteen hundred. We'll hold sixteen hundred to the outer marker. Indicated airspeed now and on the approach is a hundred knots even." Charlie glanced up at the white worms of rain that ran back along his side window. Just to let the world know, just to keep in touch, after the manner of a man floating a note off in a bottle, he added, "Okay, gear is down and locked; I've got three green here. Electric fuel pumps are on. Props at 2400. Carburetor heat test. No icing. Fuel on the mains."

"(Roger your emergency, Zero Eight Yank. We're clearing the area now with the tower and ground control frequencies.)"

Tickle.

An amber light on the panel began winking in double dashes just as the glideslope needle bobbed loose and began to move down toward the center. "Well, here we are at the outer marker,

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Newcastle. Our descent rate'll be, um, four seventy-five feet a minute." Proxmer, pale and distraught, tapped Charlie's arm hesitantly, pointing to the amber light and covering both his ears. Of course. Charlie had left the marker receiver switch in the speaker position, and the thing must be screaming wildly. He smiled in sympathy and flipped the switch off.

As the approach proceeded, Charlie was amazed and pleased; it was really very good. The crossed needles of the ILS indicator never moved more than one dot from center. "It looks good, Newcastle. We're right on the glide path, three DME out, eight hundred feet."

Now scarves of fog whipped by the windows, and a cold gray land was suddenly opened out below. Then Charlie made a grave mistake: he looked out. A hideous vertigo seized him and rolled his brain and crossed his eyes. He recovered only by looking fixedly at the panel and letting go the controls until orientation returned. Well, now. He would have to fly instruments right down to the runway. He cleared his throat. "Okay, Newcastle, we just broke out at about six hundred. Full flaps now. We may land a little long, but you won't mind, will you?" A blue light on the panel began blinking rapid dots and dashes. "Here's the middle marker. We're almost home." In his scanning circuit of all the instruments, he watched the altimeter closest. Field elevation was seventy-nine feet. At one hundred feet he applied power and leveled off for just long enough to let the altimeter catch up, then he pulled all the power off and landed rather hard, with one bounce.

At the terminal ramp, Proxmer was very eager to get out. He clawed at the door handle before the engines stopped turning, and when Charlie unlocked and opened the door, he tried to get out of his seat with the belt still fastened.

Cheerfully, Charlie waved good-by to the Proxmers as they ankled off across the ramp in the thin rain. Then he closed the door and turned off everything on the panel. Last of all, leaning back, he carefully removed his headphones and looked into each one. Nothing was there. Blinking, he hung them up on the hook beside him. He closed his eyes and tilted his head each way as he dabbed with a new handkerchief at the canal of each ear. When he opened his eyes he looked first straight through the rain-struck

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windshield at the dim horizon until his dizziness passed, then he looked into the handkerchief. He had not been wrong. There they were—two drops of a thin pink fluid.

He was all right if he did not close his eyes. He packed his books and charts into the flight case, finished the flight log form with landing time and engine hours, and climbed out on the wingwalk holding onto things. On his knees in the wet, he reached back in the plane for the flight case and his coat. But the flight case was heavy, so he took only his coat. He stood on the ground beside the plane, leaning against it, and shrugged the coat around his shoulders. Then he let go and launched himself in a slow and careful walk to the terminal building.

He was pleased that the Proxmers were not inside; he saw them waiting rigidly for a taxi to break loose from the line and roll up.

At the Coastal Airways counter, Parker, trim as always in his uniform, watched Charlie amble over. His expression was stern. Charlie swung his wrinkled coat off his shoulder and held it by the neck. He slid the flight log form across to Parker, who glanced at it, then said, "(That was a nice job, of course. I heard it on the radio. But Charlie, you knew better than to scare Mr. and Mrs. Proxmer like that, *really*. They were *very* angry.)"

Charlie sighed, serene in the quiet. "Parker, here's the keys. I'm grounding that airplane. Get that goddam audio box fixed before somebody gets killed."

Parker said, "(You bet, Charlie. First thing Monday. Where're you going?)"

Though Charlie did not hear the question, he nevertheless said, "I'm going to get me a bus home and go to bed." He turned and stumped away across the lobby with his coat hooked over one shoulder and his head tilted slightly into his handkerchief.

"(You do that, Charlie, and thanks a lot,)" Parker called after him. Then he pulled a memo pad to him and poised over it in thought, tapping his little white teeth with the brass ferrule of his pencil. After a moment, he wrote this to his secretary:

> *Sally, remind me at Tuesday's staff meeting to bring up a possible uniform change. These blue drill shirts are lovely until you get a man who perspires as much under the arms as Charlie Ralston does. It looks just awful, doesn't it? Maybe dark brown? Or navy?*
>
> *M. Parker, Pres.*

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ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS

Down Among the Phenomena

THE READER *moyen-sensuel* (if such there be), who has been hearing for a decade now reverberations out of Paris about the *nouveau roman*—vague but tremendous reverberations, rather like a DeGaulle press conference, from which one gathers that something or other is going to be done in the highest possible style worthy in every respect of the noblest traditions of France if the radical socialists can be got to agree and it doesn't rain on Thursday—such a reader, who has looked at a couple of the novels of Alain Robbe-Grillet, contemplated the existence of Nathalie Sarraute, and finds himself responding earnestly, "Oh, yes," when reminded of Claude Simon and Michel Butor—such a reader, responsible, industrious, and vaguely worried by the never-ending chase to Keep Up, may well look with glad eyes upon M. Robbe-Grillet's collection of essays and occasional pieces, translated by Richard Howard and put out in this country under the title *For a New Novel* (Grove Press, 1965). Here, he may well hope, is to be found the finely-distilled essence of M. Robbe-Grillet's lucid Gallic thought; here the articulated prism will be seen in which originate all those displays of flashing lights, critical thunderstorms, and general rumblebumble. Such a reader will certainly be disappointed. When M. Robbe-Grillet asserts that he is "not a theoretician of the novel," he makes what may well be the understatement of the decade. What is more, he has not even tried very hard to be a theoretician of the novel, or his own novel, or anyone's novel. His little booklet comprises a set of manifestos, rationalizations, reconsiderations, rebuttals, and incidental essays dating from the decade between 1953 and 1963. Some of the reconsiderations and appreciations are eloquent; some of the defences have the coiled energy of goal-line stands; but the book does not lay down very many or very striking foundations for a new fiction. Among the most prominent and strongly labored theoretical formulations to which it attains are these: that a modern novelist need not and should not write novels after the fashion of

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Honoré de Balzac, who lived some time ago; and further, that the artistic value of a work does not depend on its serviceability to a social revolution or an ideology. These positions are worked out, rather laboriously perhaps for a post-World-War-II generation, but at least to unqualified and unremarkable conclusions. And when M. Robbe-Grillet tries to advance beyond these emplacements, he becomes, at best, confusing. Two questions on which he gives contrary indications are these: What is the status of objects in his fiction? and what is the status of people?

On the whole, when the *nouveau roman* was *nouveau,* M. Robbe-Grillet seemed disposed to answer these important questions by putting things up and people down; and M. Roland Barthes, in two early and important studies of Robbe-Grillet (*Critique,* July-August, 1954; September-October, 1955), categorically qualified the method of the *nouveau roman* as *chosisme* —"thing-ism" in effect. Marks of this early *parti pris* linger among the older manifestos reprinted in *For a New Novel.* We find Robbe-Grillet talking about the writer's obligation to render the surface of objects as objects, and to refrain from anthropomorphizing the world. He does not seem to have gone quite as far as Mme. Sarraute, whose outright attack on the psychologizing novel as an antique fad of Virginia Woolf's may be found in *L'Ere du Soupçon;* but a phrase like "the destitution of the old myths of *profondeur*" could be flung forth, and seemed to imply a deliberate option for depersonalizing fiction. The new preferences, which derived from a background, more or less profound, in phenomenology, seemed to be for an almost mechanical novel, written in words which should locate, limit, measure, or define, rather than in visceral, analogical, or incantatory language.[1] And this seemed, for a while, to be the central convention of the *nouveau roman.* But at this point (about a decade ago) voices of challenge,

[1] By "incantatory" language, M. Robbe-Grillet seems to mean short-term rhythmic repetition; his novels are, of course, replete with long-term episodic repetitions, which have a particularly hypnotic effect—or would, if the overlays and repeats did not often involve a small, significant variation, a minor inconsistency. Particularly when two characters repeat a verbally-almost-identical action (or when one character mirror-images the action of another), we get a kind of large-scale fictional zeugma, a yoking of like disparates, which contributes to the special shimmering effect of the obsessed vision. My colleague, Professor David Grossvogel, tells me that Robbe-Grillet has at various times contemplated a story written on separate cards, to be shuffled and reshuffled by the reader to produce a free multiplicity of effect. I am much indebted to Professor Grossvogel for help with this paper.

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protest, and inquiry began to be raised. An outcry from traditionalists was only to be expected. Eliminating people from fiction, erasing emotion from fiction, could only seem perverse to those reared in an older tradition; its effect, they added, would be to render the novel amoral, undramatic, and dull. But such protests could easily be discounted as the work of foot-dragging neo-Balzacians; a more interesting line of thought opened up through the observation that M. Robbe-Grillet's own novels did not properly exemplify his theory if his theory was what it seemed to be.[2] The texture of *Les Gommes,* and even more patently that of *Le Voyeur* and *La Jalousie,* were bound together by a thick amalgam of psychology. The objectivity of the observation in these novels was only pseudo-objectivity; under the cool, accurate surface was to be felt (and one made no sense of the novels unless one did feel) the boiling of deep psychological turmoil. Obsession was one profound root of the stasis and repetition in the fiction; there were moments in which one could actually see the thought processes stammering to a stop in the face of some overwhelmingly obsessive vision. The chief observer of *Le Voyeur,* Mathias, was a rapist and child-murderer in the immediate circumstances of his crime (of course, characteristically, it was not precluded that the crime or crimes of Mathias never took place at all, that the whole structure of the fiction was built on a delusion). *La Jalousie* focussed on the mind of a man in the toils of obsessive suspicion. The only sense in which these were works without psychology, and psychology in depth, was that in which psychology was the answer to a puzzle posed by objective observation. The *nouveau*

[2] For convenience' sake, I list the novels below, under their French titles, with French date of publication, then under their English titles with date of translation. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by Richard Howard—so far as I have had occasion to check, they seem to be very good translations indeed.

Les Gommes	1953	*The Erasers*	1964
Le Voyeur	1955	*The Voyeur*	1958
La Jalousie	1957	*Jealousy*	1959
Dans le Labyrinthe	1959	*In the Labyrinth*	1960
La Maison de Rendezvous	1965	*La Maison de Rendezvous*	1966
		Two Novels (includes *Jealousy* and *In the Labyrinth*)	1965
Pour un Nouveau Roman (criticism)	1963	*For a New Novel*	1965
Instantanés (short sketches)	1962	*Snapshots* (tr. for British readers, with *Towards a New Novel,* by Barbara Wright)	1965

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roman was no more a novel without psychology than a *policier* is a novel without a criminal because he is identified only on the last page. Actually, psychology in depth was the fiction's center of interest precisely because of its absence.

Under fire, thus, from two directions, M. Robbe-Grillet proceeded, after a fashion, to explain himself, or at least to issue statements after the manner of a man whose fitness to hold public office has been impugned; and some of his comments are reprinted in *For a New Novel,* where they tend to confuse, as much as to clarify the issues. But the process of getting things straight was complicated by two circumstances over and above M. Robbe-Grillet's addiction to the straight-faced platitude: *nouveaux romans* continued to be written (by M. Robbe-Grillet and others), and critics, having read them, continued to produce theories of the *nouveau roman.* Some of these theories seemed to be more reassuring for the new novelists, though reassurance was the last thing of which M. Robbe-Grillet himself seemed to stand in need, than any which they had been able to concoct themselves. Professor Bruce Morrissette, of the University of Chicago, informed M. Robbe-Grillet that objects occupied within his universe, and in relation to his characters, the position of objective correlatives. Enchanted with the new formulation, M. Robbe-Grillet congratulated (whether ironically or otherwise we had better not ask) Professor Morrissette on his discovery of such elegant and apt terminology, and thanked him for inventing it. Of course Professor Morrissette declined the soft impeachment of originality. But, original or not, where did M. Robbe-Grillet's acceptance of the term (if he really accepted it) leave the issue of anthropomorphizing or not anthropomorphizing the world? Nothing could better accomplish this (presumably) evil purpose than the theory and practice of the objective correlative. The correlation, in this curious phrase, is always more operative than the objectivity, and in fact works to undermine it. The whole concept presumes that what was first perceived as an objective fact will ultimately be revealed as a "significant" symbol. When and if this happens, the old myths of depth are back with us full force. The whole matter might have been written off as one of those aberrant cross-cultural misunderstandings which are likely to afflict relations between Paris and Chicago—except that Professor Morris-

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sette proved himself a useful, an almost counter-revolutionary reader of Robbe-Grillet. When he demonstrated (in a series of studies issued separately but later united under the title *Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet*) that *Les Gommes* was a detailed, almost point-by-point retelling of the Oedipus myth, when he argued convincingly that the real *voyeur* in *Le Voyeur* was not Mathias (whoever else it was),[3] and that the climax of that novel was a hallucinated collapse of the guilt-ridden protagonist, he left *chosisme* not much more than half a leg to stand on. His reading of the novels uncovered elements of unquestionable presence in the novels, the keys he flourished in admirable enthusiasm actually worked in the locks to which he applied them. Only one question remained: in the *nouveau roman*, so interpreted and understood, what exactly was *nouveau?*

This question was, and remains, of some importance only because the novels of Robbe-Grillet include, arguably, a couple of the most intricate, interesting, and admirable fictions of our time. One doesn't need much theory of the novel or background in phenomenology to see this; a sharp ear, a keen eye for detail, and a readiness to play the fictional game hard are equipment enough for the enjoyment of most of the novels (I confess to a feeling that *Dans le Labyrinthe* is a little tiresome in its cute round-and-rounds). But a reader fleshed upon Joyce and Nabokov and Kafka and Borges (i.e., hard-shell fiction), will not, it seems to me, find anything very unfamiliar in most of the *nouveaux romans* as M. Robbe-Grillet has created them. His sort of novel is highly patterned, carefully structured, and involves an intricate game of evidence played with/against the reader. The style is cool, unorchestrated; there is no overt effort to make the reader weep, shudder, or feel ecstatic. There is no editorializing; there is no poetic justice. The prevailing theme is of grotesque tragicomedy tempered by intellectual distance, skilfully blurred outlines, uncertainty raised to an intellectual principle. Impersonal descrip-

[3] In translating, or not translating, this title, Mr. Howard solved a lot of problems the easy way. *Voyeur* in French has by no means the exclusively pathological significance that the word carries in English; it can also mean simply, "watcher." It seems, indeed, that in unpublished versions of the story, Mathias was not a *voyeur* at all but a *voyageur,* and this may have been the first title of the novel. The alternative to Mathias is the *voyeur* of the novel, is Julien Marek, who watched, or may have watched, or was in a position to watch the murder (if there was a murder) being committed.

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tion is, indeed, somewhat more prominent in M. Robbe-Grillet's fiction than in that of his predecessors; but the difference is only one of degree. Stephen Crane is also very fond of impersonal description, and very often uses it in much the same way as Robbe-Grillet does—as an immediate screen behind which may be sensed the throbbing of a personal emotion, drawn tight against a refusal to admit it. Further examples of the same literary process could be uncovered in E. Hemingway, R. Chandler, D. Hammett, G. Simenon, and *x* number of hard-guy writers. There may be a background for the device in movies, where dialogue often diverges widely from vision, and to good effect. But in any case, it seems dubious that Robbe-Grillet's use of description alone (unless accompanied by a whole new metaphysic of perception, intellection, and fictional representation) entitles his fiction to the status of a new school. Neither would mere thematic repetition, whether incremental or otherwise.

This not very stunning point can also be reached in another way, via the observation that the new novelists, as traditionally identified, don't seem to have an immense amount in common with one another, or with M. Robbe-Grillet; they don't constitute an outstandingly homogeneous group. M. Claude Simon and M. Michel Butor do not seem to have accepted the destitution of the old myths of depth to anything like the degree apparent in Robbe-Grillet; their work draws on emotions like nostalgia, and is penetrated by concepts like duration, history, and the past. Of course M. Robbe-Grillet as Professor Morrissette reads him comes close to these crimes too; but the satellites are more overt about it, and the Gallic school of high phenomenology seems to have cast them off as unworthy. Mme. Sarraute, whose *chosisme* if it exists seems largely confined to her criticism, works not on the surface of objects but on that of the experiencing mind; her work is closer to classic stream-of-consciousness. Her narration flows more smoothly because it involves less effort to coordinate or understand an exterior problem (and so less retracking because of failure) than the eddying stream of a Robbe-Grillet investigation. Apart from not being half so sharp and dramatic a novelist, she is not really very like the younger writer who has become (for a moment, anyhow) *chef d'école,* without even having a very distinct *école* to be *chef* of.

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It is, admittedly, no thundering critical novelty to conclude that there is no proper "school" of *nouveau roman;* literary schools usually turn out, upon inspection, to be figments. But at least recognition of this fact clears the decks for the question, How little theory do we need, and what sort of theory do we need, to account for the literary facts of M. Robbe-Grillet's career so far? Granted that his novels are characteristically metaphysical-psychological detective stories, what sort of metaphysics and what sort of psychology (if any) do we need in order properly to understand and appreciate them?

Apparently one must begin by discounting Professor Morrissette, though not without gratitude. The treatment of classic myth in *Les Gommes* is ironic, parodic, intentionally misleading; it exists within the novel, but bears no such serious structural significance as Professor Morrissette assigned it. Further, the use of myth in *Les Gommes* is exceptional; the novel is unique within Robbe-Grillet's *oeuvre* precisely in admitting myth at all, and it does so only grudgingly, ironically, as a way of getting rid of it. Myth is a trap into which the protagonist (and behind him the reader) is constantly falling or about to fall; it is a disaster ironically conceived and wholly beside the real point. In lieu of myth, depth, human significance, we are to have pattern; and in *Le Voyeur* we do get a pattern of figure eights which is deeply worked into the structure as well as the decoration of the novel. Mathias describes figure eights all over the island, cuts a figure eight in time (two circular spans of time connected at a point), and is haunted everywhere by visions of figure eights on the quais (as iron bolts), in the skies (as spiralling seagulls), on walls (as graffiti), everywhere. But this pattern-play, though all sorts of fun for the reader, and built into the novel's big pattern, merely carries a little further the intricate use of pattern which one finds in Kafka—for instance, the phantasmal triads which operate so vigorously in the *Metamorphosis* or *The Trial.* Its aim is to tantalize as well as to express; it involves a reader in making and breaking patterns, forces him to reach, stumble, hesitate, fall, taking advantage of the impulses to order, equilibrium, and allegory within his mind as he reads the story. This is a variety of mimesis for which, it may be, nothing prepares us quite so well as a reading of Kenneth Burke's *Philosophy of Literary Form.* Its potential for invoking

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the reader's active sympathies is immense; but using it does not quite qualify a novelist as the founder of a new school of fiction—at least not in the late 50's and 60's.

No, if M. Robbe-Grillet has a new thing here, I think its newness will likely appear somewhere in connection with the status of the object in his fiction. And so, in effect, it does. The object is immensely important in, is exactly at the forefront of, *Le Voyeur* and *La Jalousie* because both these novels build their structures around a hollow in the continuum of space, an interruption in the river of time. The perhaps-murder committed by Mathias takes place (on page 88 of the French edition, which is a perfect and absolute blank) precisely during a void of time and space in the narration. The possible infidelity of A—with Franck may have taken place, if it took place at all, during a lost gap of time unrepresented within *La Jalousie*. It is because one *néant* yawns just the other side of the object, and the world of mythical, temporal, and conventional structuring gapes across another *néant* just this side of it, that the object itself must be seen in such hard and glittering outline, measured with such aseptic and mathematical precision. An untimely metaphor will expropriate the object one way into its merely human values; a mere trick or accident of time may cause it to drop off the other way into a gaping expanse of nothingness. In this precarious world, even people may strip off elements of their personalities, be deprived of their accumulated characteristics and qualities.

Not only the characters and properties within the novel, but the novel in relation to its readers, is subject to an immense and systematic game of transformation, illusion, contradiction—and hence uncertainty. A character is walking through a snowstorm; he is walking through a rainstorm; he is walking through a sandstorm. It is high noon, it is midnight, one can't possibly tell what time it is. His name is Johnson or Johnstone or Jonestone. He passes a storewindow dummy with a wolfhound on a leash; returning a moment later, he finds the wolfhound is now a poodle. The work in which he appears is a work of pure fantasy and represents no actuality at all; it is the fruit of long experience, and represents actuality with the greatest meticulousness. The little *"Prière d'insérer"* notices in the French editions (they never survive in the English translations) give wildly discordant informa-

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tion about the books; in his interviews and public statements, the novelist feels free to say wholly discrepant and incompatible things about them. The impulse to locate, limit, measure, and define is evidently up against a potent antagonist which affects even the author in his weak attempts to mediate his own book. Perhaps it is omnipresent *néant,* perhaps merely the perverse impulse to unsettle everything. In either event, one cannot doubt that between obsessive themes, perverse style, and void-oriented philosophy, Robbe-Grillet's fiction exercises to the limit a reader's sense of fictional balance.

Of these three elements, it seems best to assume that the philosophy of phenomenology predominates—if only on the grounds that it alone promises to raise the analysis a stage above parlor-games. And the reader who wants to find this point of view developed with persuasive force cannot do better than turn to the book of yet another American critic, Mme. Olga Bernal, whose profuse and vehement exposition of the dialectic of phenomenology sometimes threatens to erode out of the novels of Robbe-Grillet a good deal of their independent dignity as works of art. The facts of literary history, on the chronicle-level, do not much interest Mme. Bernal; she grounds her study on metaphysical intuitions and deduces from them with admirable assurance and directness. To criticize the resulting system as philosophy is beyond this commentator, and to criticize it as literary criticism seems mostly irrelevant. What seems indisputable is that in rearing her structure Mme. Bernal has been able to incorporate a good deal of material from Robbe-Grillet's fiction; as a result of which her volume (subtitled *Le Roman de l'Absence*) is understood to have received the most recent cachet of M. Robbe-Grillet's approval (but whether he meant it any more seriously than his previous gestures in this direction we cannot, of course, be sure).

There are, however, a couple of reservations about Mme. Bernal's high-style, phenomenologically-oriented Robbe-Grillet, even if warranted by the author himself. For one thing, it is by no means clear why, when Nature recites to one the myth of universal void, vacancy, and nothingness, she is being less mythological than when she recites the myth of human progress, that of inevitable destiny, or any other given myth. Mme. Bernal points proudly to empty houses, vacant niches, cracks in the plaster, and

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mirrors which reflect only other mirrors, in token that *Le Voyeur* is a void-fascinated novel. Of course the success of this argument involves the inevitable downfall of that other one which deprecates the anthropomorphising of nature. Nature has been reading Heidegger instead of Bergson, and now addresses us in a Swabian accent with a terminology fresh out of *Was ist Philosophie?*—but she's still preaching.

No doubt there are philosophical ways around this momentary paradox; but it may lead also to another consideration. For Nothing is chiefly Nothing as one encounters it when expecting Something, or, more precisely, Something Else. When one expects mere nothing (a real lapse in a major continuity) and encounters an *ingenious emblem of Nothing, it has all sorts of repercussions* quite alien to the experience of void; among them might be confirmation, exultation, complicity, appreciation of the author's, or nature's, ingenuity. Already we have contaminated Nothing, almost as radically as with depth-psychology; the contamination comes from the structuring of the fiction and (through it) of the reader's responses. And the same thing holds with plot as with symbolism. Mme. Bernal tells us that *Les Gommes* is a detective story without a crime, without a criminal, with nothing at its root but an accident; that *Dans le Labyrinthe* portrays a soldier seeking to deliver a parcel for which there is no proper destination. In a word, Mme. Bernal sees the detective stories as pseudo-detective-stories, the voyages as non-voyages or anti-voyages, the novels generally as destructive of their own givens, including the reader's expectation of a novel. It's hard to say that this view is altogether wrong. But on these terms, M. Robbe-Grillet is merely exploiting a set of expectations built up by traditional fiction. He is writing shaggy-dog stories—stories the whole impact of which depends on the expectation set up by other, very unlike, stories. The exercise is a limited one, and if there's no more to be had from it than a sense of unlimited indeterminacy and a conviction that the novelistic cards have been hopelessly stacked against us, it's doubtful if the books will have many re-readers. It would be like re-reading an absolutely convincing argument in favor of suicide.

A central problem may well be that of time—time, which the novels, with their resolute limitation to the present tense and the restricted physical observation, resolutely hold at bay, while at the

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same time it remains the ambience within which story-teller and story-follower necessarily swim. We have grown accustomed to many different ways of moving and relating within fictional time —forwards, backwards, through spirals, ellipses, time-gaps, and time-overlays. The new reader is agile at following the new novelist through imaginary time. But he is spurred forward in his efforts by an unfolding awareness which measures and rewards his own personal concern as reader. If Mme. Bernal is right, the reader of a Robbe-Grillet novel makes no progress whatever in this direction. There is no progress to be made. The reader does not even discover that he cannot, for some inherent reason, know the solution to a mystery. This in itself would be a form of assurance, a categorical assertion; and he is entitled to no such comfort. He may feel on occasion that he has reached a momentary and limited confidence; but, however secure it seems, it may dissolve into the miasma of uncertainty which is experience uncoordinated and unintegrated by a consciousness. Any ordering of the world of accident would itself constitute a new myth, and so must be sternly disappointed.

Mme. Bernal's explanation of the phenomenological dialectic exists, not in time, toward a specific event or away from it, but in that present, "fictitious" after its own fashion, of philosophical discourse in general. She co-opts evidence from the novels bodily into it, depriving them (with butcherly impassivity) of their dramatic contexts, their temporal progression, whether seen as the time of characters in a story or the time of a reader in a mental action. Yet it is the impulse to temporal order that M. Robbe-Grillet counts on to keep his reader reading. If any of his novels carried the full conviction of what Mme. Bernal announces as their message, that conviction would automatically prevent our reading the others. For the author this is no doubt a very welcome absurdity, mirroring a larger absurd human predicament. But it clashes on the crude historical fact that the novels are in fact interesting to read and to re-read—not only interesting, but fascinating. The quality of imagination in them is by no means cut and dried, far less dominated by a hidebound, *a priori,* metaphysical theory. Total meaninglessness (if this is the effect they aim at) turns out to have immense complexities of resonance, so that even if we were assured in advance that each novel was an

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adventure leading nowhere, we should still find the journey full of fresh significance each time we took it. The myth of depth may have been banished from the concept of fictional character, at least by intention; but this doesn't seem to have affected the quality of depth in the novel itself. Probably it does not matter too much whether we read Robbe-Grillet's novels as *policiers* or *anti-policiers,* since in either event curiosity and inventiveness are openly pitted against an antagonist—only the position of the novelist within the economy of the fiction is in question. But whether either view is compatible with the curiously schematic and *a priori* phenomenology (an odd contradiction right there!) attributed to him by the best of his critics, seems much more dubious.

So there it is—an impasse. The best way to understand the novels is by no means the best way to read them; ultimately, it is incompatible with reading them at all, or at least with reading them as novels. No wonder the book of critical theory which M. Robbe-Grillet produced is a mess; no wonder the composition of his *oeuvre* has often seemed to be a collective, not to say eclectic, process, with helpful hints from American professors being graciously if perhaps indiscriminately welcomed by M. Robbe-Grillet as explanations of what he is trying to do. Yet what he does in his fiction (for his work in the movies has been deliberately kept out of this discussion, as a complicating consideration) is marked by little sense of the provisional or tentative, and less sense of the developing or enlarging. Having served little or no apprenticeship to the craft of fiction, Mr. Robbe-Grillet turned, as it were, direct from agronomy to fiction of a high order. *Les Gommes, Le Voyeur, La Jalousie,* and *Dans le Labyrinthe* appeared within the space of six years (from 1953 to 1959); they do not cut an arc of developing mastery, they point no particular arrow toward the future. There is, perhaps, a perceptible measure of development between the first and the second; there is a much more questionable falling-off between the third and the fourth. The period between 1959 and 1965 seems sufficiently accounted for by M. Robbe-Grillet's absorption in movie-making; *Marienbad* and *L'Immortelle* were its products. The most recent novel (*La Maison de Rendezvous,* 1965) is proclaimed by its author (but again, was he kidding?) as an altogether fresh departure, but it is nothing of the sort. We have an indeterminate number of sex-, dope-,

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and/or espionage-counterespionage-murders, committed probably in Hong Kong by and upon characters with an indeterminate number of names and perhaps identities, to be explained by a riotously proliferating number of hypotheses propounded by a continually shifting series of narrators. Among these narrative personae is one ostentatiously first-person fellow, whose presence startles the ardent Robbe-Grilletian in the early stages of the novel; but if this is the fresh departure, he leads exactly where the impersonal narrators do—to compounded uncertainty; and his success in doing so casts doubt on all the rationales which have been given for his systematic exclusion from the first four novels. Far from giving a new direction to the career of Alain Robbe-Grillet, *La Maison de Rendezvous* merely confirms the uniformity of his vision (obsessive) and of his techniques (overlay and undercut), It is not strikingly a better or worse Robbe-Grillet novel, nor even a different one; it is simply another.

No doubt it is chiefly because new directions in fiction are so much in demand that aspirants to the position of "new novel," wherever they appear, are bound to be interrogated with particular intensity. Modern culture gnaws more fiercely every day at traditional notions of human nature—whether its assaults be identified with environmental painting, pop/op art, existential philosophy, or in what passes for fiction. Everywhere the sense of hollow where there used to be center, of facade where there used to be solidity, of mechanical conditioning where there used to be spontaneous desire, calls out for expression. The crisis of fiction is an old story. Under the circumstances, and for a while at least, that writer may well go the farthest who is not too sure of where he is going. But in the end, it is the business of everyone who cares about fiction to seek out the new ways, or at least to make an effort toward charting them. Such a land-surveyor won't get even a minimum of help from M. Robbe-Grillet's theory; but his practice is another story (if, indeed, it's a story at all).

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CHARLES W. MILLARD

Some Thoughts on American Painting

"Past and Present—250 Years of American Art," an exhibition of its permanent collection mounted by the Corcoran Gallery of Art in 1966, was a panorama of American painting from the limners to Louis, supplemented by drawings, prints, and sculpture also from the Gallery's collection. A small number of pre-20th century paintings had been borrowed for the exhibition, among them several of the best, such as the lovely Copley portrait of Mary Turner Sargent, Raphaelle Peale's "After the Bath," and a Harnett "Trophy of the Hunt," but there were remarkably few lacunae or areas in which one felt the Gallery's collection should be fleshed out. Only Heade and Harnett came immediately to mind as lacking and one wished for more than one Whistler and a Ryder more characteristic than "The Stable." Criticism of the Corcoran collection before 1900 pales, however, beside such fine works as Fitz Hugh Lane's seascape "The United States Frigate *President* Engaging the British Squadron, 1815," two first-rate Bierstadts, "Buffalo Trail: The Impending Storm" and "Mount Corcoran," Whistler's sketchy and brilliant "Battersea Reach," two soft, glowing Innesses of 1891, "Sunset in the Woods" and "Tenafly, Autumn," Homer's "Light on the Sea," and William Merritt Chase's still life "An English Cod." The problem with the collection comes with the end of the nineteenth century. A great many, perhaps most, of the twentieth-century works were borrowed, and even at that the Gallery was able to maintain representativeness only at the expense of quality. Until the turn of the century American painting was a largely parochial phenomenon not engaged with the revolutionary artistic problems then transforming French painting, but if it was seldom inspired it was almost always accomplished. With the gradual recognition of what was happening in Europe, however, slowly in the late nineteenth century, with greater urgency at the time of the First World War and through the twenties, and finally explosively at the time of the Second World War when there was an influx of leading European painters to this country, American painting had to face larger problems, which eventually meant that its qualitative scope was immeasurably widened. Any important contemporary collection must therefore be not so much representative as highly selective. Unfortunately, the Corcoran has chosen to try to be representative and as a result has left major gaps and included a good deal of insignificant work. There is, for instance, no major work by Kline, Still, Newman, or Motherwell in the collection, while Pittman, Guglielmi, Peterdi, and Jimmy Ernst are included. Now that American art has taken on itself the burdens of international leadership, a gallery such as the Corcoran which col-

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lects it should recognize that leadership by assembling the most important works it can find, rather than the most diverse.

"American Landscape: A Changing Frontier," a 1966 exhibition of the National Collection of Fine Arts, faced the same problem of the changing nature of American painting but in a more acute and embarrassing form. Organized in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of the National Park Service, the exhibition attempted to follow the development of landscape as a genre in American painting. The difficulty, of course, is that by the twentieth century painting in this country as well as in France was taking heed of Maurice Denis' often quoted aphorism that "a picture—before being a battle horse, a nude woman, or some anecdote—is essentially a plane surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order." Thus, the twentieth-century paintings in the National Collection's exhibition that succeeded as landscape tended to fail as works of art, while those that succeeded as works of art had little to do with landscape. The first kind of failure was shown in a work such as Sydney Lawrence's "The Top of the Continent, Mt. McKinley" (1914), which had all the mannerisms of the magnificent Moran panoramas of Colorado (1873-1874) hung nearby with none of their emotional conviction. The other kind was exemplified by works as early as two Impressionist Twachtmans which had little enough to do with landscape in any traditional or expressive sense. Although the exhibition went to truly ludicrous lengths when it included contemporary abstract painting by people like Frankenthaler and Hofmann as landscape purely on the basis of their titles ("Fermented Soil"), it also showed the quiet continuation of an American landscape tradition into the present day by artists following a personal vision away from the mainstream of contemporary painting. The work of these men carries real conviction and one is charmed and surprised to discover that what should be an anachronism is in fact a living presence. Charles Burchfield, represented by two lovely and fanciful watercolors, was such an artist, as was Milton Avery, who absorbed the visual impact of innovators like Matisse while maintaining his own very personal style; so in a more literal vein was Edward Hopper (there were no Hoppers in the landscape exhibition, but there was a fine one in the Corcoran show). Even Marsden Hartley, whose strong "Evening Storm, Schoodic, Maine" hung in the National Collection's show, might be included in this company.

The major point made by the exhibition, however, was just how fine nineteenth-century American landscape really is, and what a variety of style and approach are represented in it. Inness again stood out with his late (1889) "Niagara," in which the entire scene dissolved in a film of paint. "Approaching Storm: Beach at Newport" by Martin Johnson Heade was one of the most striking works in the show, and one of the suavest coloristically, with its tawny brown-tan beach against a rich, threatening grey-black sky. Heade's brushwork

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in this picture is a triumph of finesse. Two Blakelocks also stood out because of the completely contemporary way in which the artist had emphasized their surfaces. In "Sunset, Navarro Ridge, California Coast," skeins and flakes of white paint trail across the varnish-brown surface recalling Magnasco or the late Corot, and in "At Nature's Mirror" the white sky lies both physically and visually on top of the green tress in the sort of ambiguous spatial relationship that one associates with later and less provincial painting. But Blakelock was a fluke, a sort of throw-ahead, and certainly what has happened to painting since his time helps us immeasurably in being able to see his canvasses.

Both the Corcoran and National Collection exhibitions raise interesting questions about the relative reputations of many artists. Any large group show is liable to result in shifts, however slight, in such reputations, and in these one is struck not so much by artists whose reputations seem in excess of their accomplishments—although John Marin certainly comes out as one such—as by artists whose names have disappeared or who are relatively little known and who turn out solid work for which they deserve greater attention. The two Twachtmans in the landscape show, for instance, suggest that he was at least as accomplished an artist as the better-known Hassam, and certainly deserving of enough exposition to decide the comparison one way or the other. Allen Tucker's "Cloud Burst, New Mexico," executed in a sort of Munch-Kokoschka expressionist style, makes one want to see more of his work. But it is among the nineteenth-century painters that we seem to have lost the most, and this shows particularly in the Corcoran exhibition. What, for instance, of William Trost Richards who produced the luminous "On the Coast of New Jersey" (1883), or of Irving Ramsay Wiles, Painter of an Eakins-like double portrait of his parents dated 1889, or of William Keith, who was represented by the ebullient "By the Creek, Sonoma?" Who was Jacob Hart Lazarus, painter of the appealing "Girl with Flowers" (1853), of whom the catalogue laconically notes that we "know little"? And how much scholarly work has been done on the group of mid-century academic genre painters among whom are Richard Caton Woodville, Horace Bonham, and Charles F. Ulrich? If exhibitions such as these show two distinct visual modes in American painting, that obtaining from the founding of the colonies to the First World War and that which developed between the wars and bloomed after the Second, they show also the threads of a continuing tradition. Now that American painting has taken such a radically different direction we should be free to take a fresh historical look at what has been produced in this country and bring much of it back to public attention—both to put earlier painting in its proper perspective and to trace the threads of that tradition, in which there may be more continuity than we presently suspect.

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There are several important points that need to be made about American painting. First, there are neither geniuses nor revolutionaries in American art before the twentieth century. There is no Goya, no Manet, no Cézanne. There is, however, a steady stream of well-trained and thoroughly accomplished painters whose work kept alive an artistic tradition and a curiosity about what happened elsewhere that provided fertile ground out of which the towering figures of modern art in this country could spring. Second, although American art has been stylistically and compositionally derivative—portraiture derivative from English painting, genre from German nineteenth and Dutch seventeenth century painting, and landscape from German and French nineteenth and French and Dutch seventeenth century painting—there has always been an astringency about it that marks it as a peculiar and provincial phenomenon. Broad brushwork has tended to be suppressed in favor of an inelegant, flat surface, forms have been carefully described by meticulous draftsmanship, and color has generally been dark and mixed. The major exceptions to these rules have been those artists who chose to live in Europe. Both Copley and West became very different painters after their emigrations to England—their brushwork freer, their color more sensuous—and Sargent and Whistler devoted their efforts to working in a fashionable continental style, leaving painters such as Eakins and Homer to continue the native traditions.

Given these facts, there is probably no other national school that has produced such a succession of accomplished artists over such a long period of time, nor any in which painting has been so completely a mirror of the life of the nation in which it was produced. It is in the way its content is seen—the point of view that shapes the context in which that content is placed—the directness of its vision—that American painting is unique. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the limners satisfied the requirement for likenesses of the people who first settled and worked the land—astringent, iconic images of a serious citizenry. With the growth of a wealthy bourgeoisie portraiture took on a gentler air, and painters such as Copley in his American period became masters at representing the things and stuffs of the merchants—polished wood, silk, satin, and glowing silver. For the young republic there developed briefly a classicizing mythological strain in painting, and then for a more peaceful, settled time the Hudson River painters produced their sylvan reveries. Finally, in a last burst of native energy before American painting began to note and then shape what was happening abroad, the landscapists of the west brought all the expansionist vigor of the late nineteenth century both to the size and execution of their canvasses. Because the modern revolution in painting has been a formal one and we now see in formal terms, we all too easily dismiss American painting as bad or irrelevant without seeing how completely it embodies the ideas and ideals of the

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period of this country's growth. Because it is also sentimental painting—painting of sentiment, not of sentimentality—it is even further removed from our comprehension. But its sentiment is directed at real and immediate things—family, home, and native surroundings—and springs from deep attachment to places known, seen, and loved. It is not the sentiment of an imagined or reconstructed religiosity or of the indefinite in time and place. American painting depends heavily on experience or background common to painter and beholder, and for this reason becomes increasingly inaccessible with time and perhaps totally so for someone not native to this country, but its inaccessibility is mitigated by the unpretentiousness of its anecdote, and it is directly and through this unpretentiousness that American painting must be approached. It may take the ingenuousness of the Scott of "Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,/Who never to himself has said,/This is my own, my native land!" to be able to appreciate fully what happens in it. For better or worse, we are no longer so ingenuous. Still, who can stand in front of Bierstandt's "Buffalo Trail: The Impending Storm," and not be moved by the richness of its color, the foreground trees speckled with white against the blue-gray sky, green turning to black in the middle distance—not respect, even if he cannot share, the emotion that the artist and others like him must have had on confronting such a scene? Who can fail to feel the nostalgia implied for us who have known little of such a world in the halcyon calm of Inness' "Sunset in the Woods" or "Tenafly, Autumn"? And certainly even those who have never been there and never will must respond to the overwhelming sweep and coloristic richness of Moran's great Colorado canvasses, particularly the tumultuous "Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone." This is truly American painting, rich with overtone, well and carefully executed, brilliantly successful within the limits it has set for itself or had set for it.

In the light of the development of American painting it would at once seem, as has often been claimed, that Pop is the inheritor and continuer of its tradition. It deals with the immediate contemporary world, taking objects from that world and presenting them in an apparently literal and straightforward way. It generally avoids mannerisms of brushwork and adheres to the most careful delineation possible of what it portrays. Even in many of their titles—Wesselmann's "Great American Nudes," for instance—Pop artists seem to be saying that they see themselves as continuing an American tradition. Much, however, as one would like to see in painting of such prosaic and peculiarly American subjects the continuance of a tradition, one is ultimately forced to realize that Pop has all the attributes of the American painting tradition with none of its substance. It only wears the mask of that tradition. It is a hollow phenomenon, the pursuit of a cosmetic strain in painting concealing insubstantiality behind an aggressive or

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Martin Johnson Heade
APPROACHING STORM: BEACH NEAR NEWPORT
28 × 58¼
(Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston;
M. & M. Karolik Collection)

Albert Bierstadt
BUFFALO TRAIL: THE IMPENDING STORM
29½ × 49½
(In the collection of The Corcoran Gallery of Art;
gift of Mr. and Mrs. Lansdell K. Christie)

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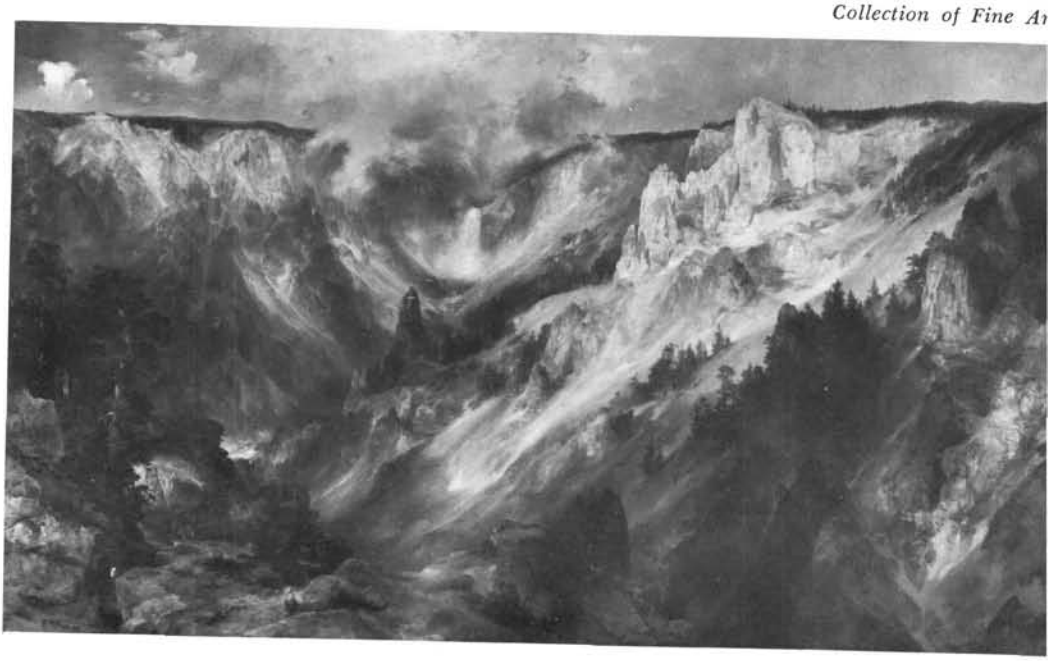
George Inness
SUNSET IN THE WOODS
48 × 70
(In the collection of The Corcoran Gallery of Art)

Thomas Mo
GRAND CANYON OF THE YELLOWSTO
96 ×
(Courtesy of The Smithsonian Institution Natio
Collection of Fine A



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Jacob Hart Lazarus
GIRL WITH FLOWERS
41 × 32
(In the collection of The Corcoran Gallery of Art; gift of Virginia Wallach)

Richard Caton Woodville
WAITING FOR THE STAGE
15 × 18½
(In the collection of The Corcoran Gallery of Art)

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Marisol
INSTALLATION, GALLERY EXHIBITION, APRIL 1966
(Courtesy Sidney Janis Gallery, N. Y.)

Andy Wa
INSTALLATION, GALLERY EXHIBITION, APRIL 1
(Courtesy Leo Castelli Gallery, N.

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striking façade. This is not to say that all Pop artists are hypocrites consciously defrauding the public, but simply that the Pop artists are not those able to come most profoundly to grips with expressive problems and that the most significant creative talents of today have not chosen Pop as their medium of expression. There is no philosophical reason why they should not—Pop is inherently neither better nor worse than any other style—but the fact seems to be that they have not. The majority of Pop artists have turned aside from the American painting tradition by taking from it its least essential characteristic—its prosaic subjects—and divorcing themselves from its essence—direct emotional confrontation with those subjects. Pop is simply not sufficiently deeply felt or sufficiently deeply engaged with the problems of contemporary life and painting to have any significant place in the history of the American painting tradition.

If Pop cannot be accepted among the more serious trends in painting, however, it is triumphantly successful as decoration, as last year's Marisol and Warhol exhibitions demonstrated. In the case of Marisol, it is store-window decoration (mannequins), and in that of Warhol, interior decoration (wallpaper), but in both cases it belongs to that part of life concerned with the application of fashionable design to things or places for their beautification—a beautification which gives way to something else as soon as standards of taste change. This is in no way intended as a pejorative judgement on the works involved, but merely as an attempt to create a context in which they may be seen positively for what they are. Considered as art, the productions of Marisol and Warhol must indeed be judged negatively, but seen as decoration they are not only successful but pleasing and amusing. Since the trivial and ephemeral play such a large and important role in life, any way in which they can be enhanced—any way in which life itself can be made more pleasant or amusing—is certainly to the good, and in this sense both Marisol's and Warhol's efforts are highly creditable. In a Fifth Avenue department store window, Marisol's mannequins would bring more pleasure to more people, and more appropriately so, than they could ever do on the floor of a 57th Street gallery.

The relationships between art and life are the crux of the matters we have been discussing. The great strength of traditional American painting was the modesty and fidelity with which it observed life. Since the representation of life has ceased to be the chosen province of painting, there have been various attempts to break down the barriers between the two, to incorporate life and its materials directly into art, the latest of which is Pop. The result of these attempts has been a confusion of values and a blurring of boundaries, and in the popular rush to glorify almost everything into art, and partly, one supposes, simply to meet the consumer demand to possess art, all sorts of things have become art by fiat. The things most easily assimilated into the category "art" are those peripheral to it, those which may seem like

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art at the moment they are created—decoration, fashion, etc. There arises a situation in which not only are people who create flattered into thinking that what they have created is significant art, when they may actually not have come to grips with any problems of more than passing interest, but in which many critics, museum people, and historians do their best to identify and justify such creations as high art, giving it the full cachet of scholarly treatment. An example of this treatment is the recent book put together for Praeger by Lucy Lippard, entitled *Pop Art*.[1] It is an egregious example of the kind of apologism that misleads people into thinking that the subject with which it deals is an important one. Frequently confused and imprecise —the essay by Nicolas Calas is all but incomprehensible—the book tries to identify Pop in various ways with the American painting tradition, as well as with certain kinds of formalist painting, and makes great point of the adaptation of art to life, or the incorporation of life in art, that Pop supposedly represents. What the writers who produced the book seem to have failed to realize is that any work of art participates *ipso facto* in the taste and life of its time, that by the very fact of their contemporaneous being art and life are inextricably connected. What is important about a work of art, and identifies it as such, is its continuing responsiveness—its ability to transcend the timely—and the degree to which it does so is an index of its greatness. The effort by the apologists of Pop to make the connections between art and life as explicit as possible involves a refusal to recognize and respect the uniqueness of art and life and their ultimate inexpressibility in terms of direct translation. Art is always to some degree an abstraction from life, and its essence is always a non-verbal reality. No more answer is needed to the claims of Pop to be high art and the inheritor of the American painting tradition than the confrontation of, say, a Warhol and an Eakins.

[1] POP ART, by *Lucy R. Lippard*. Praeger. $7.50 cloth, $3.95 paper.

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B. H. HAGGIN

Music and Ballet Chronicle

TOSCANINI WOULD HAVE FOUND EVEN MORE to object to in the New York City Opera's new production of *La Traviata* last fall than in the Metropolitan's. As I pointed out once, it was the New York City Opera that started the practice of giving old operas new faces with innovations in staging; and Julius Rudel, though he has musical competence as a conductor that Rudolf Bing doesn't have, has shown no more sense for artistic values than Bing in his choice of new operas and his productions of old ones. Moreover, since the New York City Opera has had less money than the Metropolitan to pay for talent, most of its innovating stage productions have looked like dime-store bargain-basement counterparts of the Metropolitan's. This was true of its new *La Traviata* at the City Center three years ago, and again of the one last fall. The *Traviata* three years ago anticipated the Metropolitan's of this year in transferring the second act from the drawing room to the garden; the one last fall, designed by Robert Fletcher, left the second act in the drawing room, but had Flora, in the next act, give a *bal masqué* in the courtyard of her house instead of the salon specified in the score. This caused an important change in the action: instead of Violetta and Alfredo confronting each other alone in the deserted salon, and Alfredo then calling in the other guests from the adjoining rooms for his denunciation of her, the confrontation was witnessed by the others from the start. Moreover, the other acts were damaged by Frank Corsaro's innovations in direction. In the first act the girls running across the stage pursued by drunken amorous men grotesquely misrepresented the actual dramatic situation—a party in an elegant salon frequented by barons and marquises. In the second act the wheeling in of a tea table and Violetta's pouring tea for Germont and herself, distractingly incongruous in the tense dramatic situation, led to an even more damaging detail: during Violetta's anguished outburst a few moments later, Germont lifted his cup and took sips of tea. This was in accordance with the present-day idea of making opera into effective theater with the kind of action one sees on the dramatic stage, which, however, by drawing attention to itself and away from the music, makes the opera less effective as opera. That idea produced Patricia Brooks's performance as Violetta, with its profusion of novel movement and stage business not only between arias but during an aria, where it drew attention away from the music that was intended to be the medium of expressive communication. And it also led Miss Brooks to chew up the music in explosions of tremulous tone that made their dramatic effect with the impact of their intensity, instead of producing shaped phrases that made their dramatic effect

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by expressive inflection and coloring. However, there was excellent singing by Placido Domingo as Alfredo and good singing by Dominic Cossa as Germont, in a performance in which Franco Patane's conducting didn't exercise a control over the singers that fitted their singing into a musical shape it created with the orchestra (as Vincent La Selva's had done in the Brooklyn Opera performance), but was instead a mere beating of time that accommodated the orchestra's playing to whatever the singers did.

The production of Handel's *Julius Caesar* was another matter. Though I found Ming Cho Lee's permanent construction unattractive, its high platform with stairs leading down to the stage worked admirably in filling with action the enormous space framed by the proscenium arch. Excellent too were the costumes designed by José Varona in an eighteenth-century idea of ancient Roman and Egyptian styles; the choreographed movements of a stylized plastique that Tito Capobianco had the singers make; the singing of Norman Treigle, Beverly Sills, Maureen Forrester and Beverly Wolff; the conducting of Rudel. And it all added up to an outstanding achievement in opera production.

The new American opera commissioned with Ford Foundation money was Vittorio Giannini's *The Servant of Two Masters.* It was amazing to read in *The Times* that the work "abounds in melodies, but they are tunes without a strong personal impress," and in *The World Journal Tribune* that "Giannini's first error was to set the [Goldoni] play in a musical style full of the realistic passion of the post-Puccini veristic manner." For these statements were true of Giannini's earlier *The Taming of the Shrew,* an imitation of the turn-of-the-century Italian-operatic-comedy style; but the striking thing about *The Servant of Two Masters* was the attempt at a different modern style, which produced the arid arioso over dissonant orchestral hubbub that was even worse than the Italianate melody over bland hubbub in the earlier work. And Capobianco this time achieved a parody of a high school dramatic club's attempt at *commedia dell'arte.* It was another appalling waste of the company's resources of talent and effort, and presumably not the last.

As for the Metropolitan, the new Wieland Wagner stage production of *Lohengrin* was another of those we are getting these days, which substitute the designer's and director's ideas for the composer's, sometimes with disregard of the meaning of the words that are being sung. Thus Wagner places the first act of *Lohengrin* on the bank of a river, and has Lohengrin make his entrance in a boat drawn by a swan, to which—after he has stepped onto the bank—he turns to sing his thanks and farewell. But his grandson chooses to place the act in a space enclosed by a vaulted and veined backdrop, with the chorus lined up on platforms in a large semi-circle at the back, and the principals spaced out in front; to have principals and chorus peer out

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into the Metropolitan's auditorium and sing their amazement at what is not there to amaze them—Lohengrin in the boat drawn by the swan—while Lohengrin actually makes his appearance behind them out of a backstage depth under a huge swan projected on the backdrop; and to have him step forward and address to the audience his thanks and farewell to the swan. Toscanini would have vehemently denied the right of anyone—even the composer's grandson—to change the scene and action in this way; as for me, I tried to discover what in the changed scene and action Wieland Wagner might have thought was better than the original, but could find nothing. And if the purpose was merely the elimination of the absurdity, for an audience today, of a knight arriving in a boat drawn by a swan, what was substituted was, for this audience, just as absurd.

I dispense with discussion of the other singularities of this kind that competed for attention with the largely excellent dramatic and musical performances by the principals. Outstanding was the Ortrud of Christa Ludwig, which revealed her as a singing actress of compelling power like that of Frida Leider and Lotte Lehmann. Working effectively with it was the Telramund of Walter Berry; and Sándor Kónya was a handsome Lohengrin whose singing was beautifully phrased even when his fine voice seemed to tire: but Ingrid Bjoner's unattractive, quavering voice made her Elsa disturbingly inadequate. Böhm paced and shaped the work well.

Whereas Beni Montresor's idiosyncratic style worked enchantingly for the fantastic world of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* in the New York City Opera's new production, Marc Chagall's by now tiresome clichés—in their irrelevance to Mozart's work, and on the gigantic scale of the many curtains and backdrops that overwhelmed it, in the Metropolitan's production—were an irritating obtrusion that one had to fight off all evening to see and hear the performance. The one I attended had the superbly sung and acted Tamino and Papageno of Nicolai Gedda and Hermann Prey, but the dumpy-figured and cold-voiced Pamina of Pilar Lorengar, a Queen of the Night whom Lucia Popp's tiny voice couldn't make the formidable personage she should be, and the hollow-voiced Sarastro of Jerome Hines. Krips gave it sufficient animation, but provided an excessively bland orchestral context for the singing.

Britten's *Peter Grimes* was given the benefit of the excellent sets and costumes of Tanya Moiseiwitsch and staging of Tyrone Guthrie, the musical performance superbly conducted by Colin Davis and made impressive—in spite of Lucine Amara's pallid-and tremulous-voiced Ellen Orford—by the singing of Jon Vickers in the title role, Geraint Evans as Balstrode, the other soloists, the chorus. But the music, with few exceptions—notably Peter's anguished phrases after his argument with Balstrode in Act 1, and the affecting orchestral introduction to Act 3—struck me again as resourcefully contrived to describe the

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scene and carry the words, but without the additional quality and power that would make those words eloquent and moving.

As for Marvin David Levy's *Mourning Becomes Electra,* like Giannini's *The Servant of Two Masters* it offered arbitrary vocal arioso with no expressiveness or relevance to the words, over dissonant orchestral hubbub with no relevance to the arioso. And it constituted the beginning of Rudolf Bing's participation in the Ford Foundation-American opera ballet originated by the New York City Opera's Julius Rudel, on the Metropolitan's Tiffany—as against the New York City Opera's dime-store—scale. Which is to say that Bing wasted on the worthless Levy opera commissioned with Ford Foundation money a far more costly production (designed by Boris Aronson) and more costly singers (principally the superb Marie Collier and Evelyn Lear), orchestra and conductor (Zubin Mehta) than Rudel did on *The Servant of Two Masters.*

The mezzo-soprano Janet Baker, last fall, deserved the enthusiastic applause at her concert with the Melos Ensemble at Hunter College Assembly Hall and her solo recital in Town Hall for her singing in pieces by Handel, Spohr and Chausson at the first, and in songs of Berlioz, Duparc and Fauré at the second—the beauty of her voice, the security in its production that enabled it to do whatever was required of it, and the unfailing musical intelligence and taste revealed in what it was required to do. Playing with her in the Spohr songs were the extraordinary clarinettist Gervase de Peyer and a superb pianist, Lamar Crowson; and the Melos Ensemble's performances of music by Purcell, Mozart and Janáček would have been first-rate if not for the poor tone, intonation and style of the first violin.

An April concert at Hunter College had Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau wasting his voice and art on Handel's inconsequential cantata *Dalla Guerra Amorosa* and an elaborate and uninteresting Notturno by the Swiss composer Othmar Schoeck. The first was sung with continuo played by Claus Adam, cellist of the Juilliard Quartet, and the harpsichordist Kenneth Cooper; the second with the entire Juilliard Quartet, which in between performed the one major work of the program, Schubert's tremendous *Death and the Maiden* Quartet. The performance had the necessary intensity; but the group's bad habit of slowing down for the end of a phrase or the beginning of something new was damaging to momentum and continuity.

Fischer-Dieskau also sang in Leonard Bernstein's three performances of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* with the New York Philharmonic. I heard the third, in which Bernstein characteristically whipped up tempo and excitement in the animated songs, making the tenor Jess Thomas inaudible in much of the opening *Trinklied vom Jammer der Erde,* and heavily italicized details in the quiet songs, impelling Fischer-Dieskau to do the same. (But in Haydn's Symphony No. 87

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Bernstein, as always, operated within the limits he seems to accept with Haydn and Mozart, and produced an admirable performance.) In the American Opera Society's performance of Gluck's *Orfeo* conducted by Jonel Perlea, Fischer-Dieskau didn't exceed his normal expressive eloquence. But while this was warmly applauded, it was Elisabeth Schwarzkopf's appallingly mannered and explosive singing that elicited the hysteria with which the opera public, and especially the American Opera Society's audience, responds indiscriminately to good and bad in singing. (At the earlier performance of Cherubini's *Medea* it had so responded to Gwyneth Jones, who now and then produced a few notes that were steady, and therefore impressively powerful and beautiful, but many more that were unfocussed, tremulous and unattractive.)

As for Fischer-Dieskau's song recitals in Carnegie Hall, all three were among the great events of the season—the greatest being the one at which he employed his remarkable voice and affecting art in the succession of marvels of expressive vocal writing in contexts of imaginative piano writing that Schubert produces in *Die Winterreise*. The Schumann program didn't include the *Dichterliebe* cycle that can be called Schumann's *Winterreise,* and did include a number of his less interesting songs, in which one's pleasure was derived entirely from the performances. And this was true also of the Beethoven program, which included a number of uninteresting songs in addition to the beautiful *An die ferne Geliebte* cycle and a few others.

Thinking about certain characteristics of the performances that had struck me, and groping for a description of the operation that would include them, I received unexpected help: one of Harold Schonberg's confident pronouncements misplacing one performer in a nonexistent relation to another. "Where other singers use their voice in an instrumental-like manner (this was especially true of some of the previous generation of lieder singers)," wrote Schonberg, "Mr. Fischer-Dieskau is more of the Elena Gerhardt school." I don't recall any earlier *Lieder*-singers who used their voices "in an instrumental-like manner"; and one way to describe Fischer-Dieskau's operation is to say that it is the opposite of Gerhardt's. With her the perfectly proportioned musical shape was paramount and established limits which the inflection of vocal tone that expressed the meaning of the words might not exceed; with him the meaning of the words is paramount and is expressed at times in inflection that exceeds those limits. The singer of the past of whom this was true was Lotte Lehmann; but unlike her explosions Fischer-Dieskau's moments of vehemence are part of a controlled and continuous progression which his extraordinary musical intelligence and taste make esthetically as well as expressively convincing.

A year ago, wondering why he had recorded another *Winterreise* with Jörg Demus so soon after the one with Gerald Moore, I heard a

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possible reason in Demus' very first piano chords, which had an incisiveness of attack and tone and a musical life that Moore's playing didn't have; and I therefore regret that Demus didn't play in the Carnegie Hall performance instead of Moore. I am not saying Moore didn't play very well; I am saying Demus would have played even better. And I am disputing the idea of himself that Moore has managed to get the press to spread around: that of "the king of accompanists," and the first as well as the greatest of his line. Coenraad Bos's marvelous playing with Elena Gerhardt can be heard on her records of Wolf and Schubert, which Moore must know; and he must also have heard the records on which the incomparable Franz Rupp created exciting life around Kreisler's playing in the Beethoven sonatas, and around Schlusnus' singing. Demus' playing with Fischer-Dieskau is of that kind; Moore's is not.

Additional great events were Ashkenazy's recitals at the Metropolitan Museum, where he performed Beethoven's Sonatas Op. 31 No. 2 and Op. 101 and Schumann's *Carnaval,* and in Carnegie Hall, where he performed Mozart's Sonata K.576, Chopin's Scherzos and Prokofiev's Sonata No. 8, which proved to be another tedious specimen of what a friend once called Prokofiev's later wall-to-wall writing. The performances presented one, as always, with extraordinary mastery of the instrument in the service of superb musical conceptions. But in *The Times* one read that in the Beethoven sonatas Ashkenazy had "unsuccessfully grappled with the inner drama of the music."

Nonsense in *The Times* cannot hurt a foreign celebrity like Ashkenazy; but it can gravely damage the career of an uncelebrated young American, since managers all over the country make their decision to engage or not to engage a performer on the basis of the *Times* review, in the mistaken belief that a reviewer on *The Times* has the authoritative competence the paper's prestige would lead one to expect. A few years ago, at the request of friends, I attended the first recital of a twenty-two-year-old pianist named Michael Rogers, expecting to hear the talent they had told me about, but unprepared for his actual astounding mastery of instrument and music. This didn't keep the *Times* reviewer from writing the customary report on a debut recital, in which he described what one might expect to hear at such a recital, and in so doing demonstrated his possession of the discernment that enabled him to recognize that Rogers had "an inborn flair for the keyboard" but was not "as yet a finished artist," that his playing "sometimes had moving quality" but "was often superficial," and so on. It wasn't a review that would bring a performer overwhelming demands for appearances; and there was no opportunity to hear Rogers again until his recital this year in the Metropolitan Museum's Young Artists Series. In the very first phrase of Schumann's Intermezzi Op. 4 I heard again the assured mastery of instrument and music that had astounded me the first time. Beethoven's *Appassionata*

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Sonata, which followed, was hardly a work in which to expect surprises; but Rogers did offer the surprise of playing more powerfully impassioned than I could recall ever hearing in the work—and this not only in the fast movements but in the andante, which is usually rattled off as a mere interlude before the stormy finale, but which Rogers related to the impassioned fast movements by making it slower than usual and more intensely expressive. But readers of *The Times* were told of "a forceful keyboard personality [who] dives into his pieces with furious energy, seemingly more intrigued with their virtuoso potential than their emotional content," and who took the first movement of the *Appassionata* at "a breathless clip," and "after the slow movement, which seemed downright listless by comparison, took off again in the finale," which "went like the wind, with musical values trailing behind the sheer propulsive thrust of the playing." And that became the official image.

For the rest, at Hunter College the pianist Peter Frankl offered beautifully sensitive performances of Beethoven's *Eroica* Variations, Schumann's *Waldszenen* and Debussy's second set of *Images;* and the violinist Arthur Grumiaux and pianist Mieczyslaw Horszowski—who at an earlier appearance at the Metropolitan Museum had achieved an integrated working together only part of the time—produced excellent ensemble performances of sonatas by Bach, Beethoven and Mozart; but the Fine Arts Quartet disappointed me with tonally unattractive and musically undistinguished playing in a couple of Mozart quartets. At the New School the excellent playing of a group of seven strings and winds led by Felix Galimir in Beethoven's Septet confirmed Toscanini's contention that satisfactory balance between the strings and winds was unattainable in the piece in its original form. And at the last concert of his Carnegie Hall concerto series the exuberant Mstislav Rostropovich, who does everything but throw his cello in the air and apply his bow to it there, wasted his mastery on Britten's Symphony for Cello and Orchestra, another example of Britten's resourceful craftsmanship operating in place of real creativity and producing the mere appearance of a musical operation, and on Honegger's slick Concerto in C, but finally applying that mastery more profitably to Tchaikovsky's Variations on a Rococo Theme.

The superb London Symphony, which played under Rozhdestvensky for Rostropovich, played under its own conductor, Istvan Kertesz, in effective performances of Berlioz's *Les Francs-Juges* Overture, Elgar's *Enigma* Variations and Strauss's *Don Juan,* at one of Carnegie Hall's International Festival concerts. And another in this series gave me my first hearing of the excellent Toronto Symphony and Seiji Ozawa, whose conducting of the orchestra in Berlioz's *Fantastique* was more impressive than his too highly charged performance of the music. But he produced a satisfying performance of Verdi's Overture to *I Vespri Siciliani,* and what seemed like a good performance of the

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Canadian composer Pierre Mercure's *Triptyque,* whose modern idiom communicated very little to me. One thing of additional interest to me about these concerts was that the two orchestras didn't sound hard and raucous, as the Detroit Symphony had done in a concert last fall; and that Leon Fleisher's piano in the performance of Ravel's Concerto for the Left Hand with the Toronto Symphony didn't sound like an iron foundry, as Malcolm Frager's in Beethoven's Concerto No. 4 last fall had done. What I have been able to find out about all this leads me to believe that the reason for the difference in sound was last summer's extension of the front of the Carnegie Hall stage several feet into the auditorium, to provide the space at the back that would be required by a new organ, and the fact that the Detroit Symphony sat out in the added space whereas the London and Toronto orchestras sat within the former limits of the stage. If my belief is correct, it means that when the new organ is installed, compelling orchestras to sit out in the added space, they will all sound as bad as the Detroit Symphony last fall. And if that is so, I don't see how the hall's Board of Directors can do anything but decide to drop the new organ in order to preserve the acoustic excellence for which Carnegie Hall was saved.

The one program of the National Ballet I saw, during its brief season at New York's City Center, offered Balanchine's *Serenade;* two pieces, *Danse Brillante* and *Homage,* effectively contrived in the Balanchine style by the company's director, Frederic Franklin; and Job Sanders' *Bachianas,* which was more modern dance than ballet, and uninteresting. The performances were good ones by a company with a well-trained corps and better female soloists than male—one girl, Andrea Vodehnal, being especially good. But in *Serenade* it was evident that the dancers were less strong than those of the New York City Ballet; and it seems to me, therefore, that instead of having his company perform the same Balanchine pieces as the New York City Ballet, which it cannot do as well, Franklin should revive for it the great works of the past that Balanchine is no longer interested in, such as *Danses Concertantes* and *Le Baiser de la Fée.*

Edward Villella was reported to have said his ballet *Narkissos* represented no more than a desire to try his hand at choreography. And the result, produced by the New York City Ballet last fall, revealed some skill in contriving effective movements for his solos and his dances with Patricia McBride and Michael Steele, but no ability to do as much for the corps, or to relate the passages for soloists and corps in the continuous, coherent progression of a ballet.

Jacques d'Amboise's *Prologue,* concerned with the characters of Shakespeare's *Othello* before the beginning of his play—with its dances characterizing the noble Othello, the exquisite Desdemona and the dynamically sinister Iago, excellently performed by Francisco Mon-

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cion, Mimi Paul and John Prinz; its dances of the minor characters; its Elizabethan music; its rich costumes and set by Peter Larkin—added up to a Royal Ballet or Ballet Theater type of piece, somewhat better than theirs. And John Taras' *La Guirlande de Campra,* taking its title from the undistinguished variations by contemporary French composers on a theme of the eighteenth-century composer Campra, offered competently made but undistinguished dances whose only interest was that of their execution by Violette Verdy, Mimi Paul and some of the other dancers.

Balanchine's contributions began with *Ragtime,* a new setting of the 1918 Stravinsky piece. Clive Barnes objected in *The Times* that Balanchine had ignored the difference between what jazz meant to him in 1966 and what it had meant to Stravinsky in 1918; but to my eye and ear the difference was one between something living and something drained of life; and I enjoyed the living thing Balanchine produced around Stravinsky's desiccated skeleton. I also enjoyed Suzanne Farrell's and Arthur Mitchell's dancing in it.

Next there were the new happenings Balanchine introduced in the Village Scene of *Don Quixote:* the knight's encounter with a group of vicious-looking beggars, ending absurdly in his dignified dancing with one of them; a gypsy dance beautifully performed by Farrell; a juggler's dance brilliantly performed by Paul Mejia.

And in April there was first *Trois Valses Romantiques* to Chabrier's music of that title, which Balanchine put together in place of a new Taras work that was postponed. It was pleasant but not of great consequence (for me there was the awareness that the setting of the third waltz was miles removed from the wonderful invention for this music in *Cotillon* years ago). And it left one unprepared for the marvelous three ballets of *The Jewels,* which offered the operation of Balanchine's amazingly undiminished powers in the terms of his personal dance vocabulary in all the variety it has acquired by now, but also in the terms of the individual styles of his dancers, and all these basically conditioned by the different styles of the music. Thus the first ballet, *Emeralds,* to music of *Fauré,* offered pieces devised for Verdy to enchant the eye with her aristocratic elegance in pose and movement—in the deployment of her body in supported turns and lifts, the inflection of her arms and hands (those lovely arms that Clive Barnes thinks are Melissa Hayden's). And it offered a solo for Mimi Paul to delight one with her special pointed-up elegant fluidity; an excitingly original *pas de deux* in which—powerfully held and guided by Moncion, in a manner reminiscent of the *pas de deux* of *Agon* and *Episodes*—Paul stepped about on her points. The third ballet, *Diamonds,* to parts of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 3, offered a long impassioned *pas de deux* for Farrell and d'Amboise, which exhibited her large, open, grand and breathtakingly beautiful movements; a fast scherzo for three girls in which Farrell and d'Amboise made brilliant

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solo appearances (and in which Balanchine inserted a little joke: a few peasant-dance-style arm movements of the girls, occasioned by a folksong-like phrase of the trombone); a finale for large ensemble, with further solo episodes for Farrell and d'Amboise, and a dazzling coda which attained grandeur with the majestic orchestral pronouncement that preceded the final stretto. Between these two ballets in pure classical style, *Rubies,* the most strikingly original and fascinating and exciting of the three, fitted to the perversely rhythmed fast movements of Stravinsky's Capriccio a perpetual motion—exhibiting among other things the exuberant and spectacular virtuosity of Edward Villella—in the witty and amusing style, with borrowings from American show dancing, that Balanchine first devised thirty years ago for another Stravinsky neo-classical score, *Jeu de Cartes.* That style now had additions from the recent ballets to modern scores: the amusingly perverse inflections of body in the movements in which Villella, Patricia McBride, Patricia Neary and the corps disported themselves; the amusing episode in the first movement in which four boys, each grasping a hand or a foot of Neary, moved it now here, now there, as in the Concerto Op. 24 of *Episodes;* the deadpan perversities of Neary and the corps that ended the movement. There were perverse twists and bends also in the *pas de deux* of the middle movement, in which Villella, again, held and guided McBride in the powerful manner reminiscent of *Agon* and *Episodes.*

I have had to try to give some idea of this latest Balanchine masterpiece; but I have done so only too aware of the correctness of a friend's exclamation after *Rubies*: "Indescribable!"

As for dancers I saw in new roles, Farrell's charmingly idiosyncratic inflection of arms and hands didn't work well, to my eye, in *Bugaku,* where it made personal what should be ritualized. But her Sleepwalker in *La Sonnambula,* in which her arms were fixed in one position, was very effective. Verdy was delightful in the Fourth Campaign of *Stars and Stripes;* and she and Mimi Paul made distinguished contributions, in their different styles, to a *Serenade* I saw. Paul also was a lovely Sugar Plum Fairy in *The Nutcracker,* and was convincing in an *Afternoon of a Faun* in which it was a pleasure to see Moncion's powerful performance again. Kay Mazzo's pert face made her less believable in this piece; but she was superbly effective in the Concerto Op. 24 of *Episodes.* Prinz didn't have the physical power with which to make the effect in *Tarantella* that Villella does; but his elegance and clarity in a pas de trois in *Emeralds* were a pleasure to see; and in *Illuminations* his impressive performance included dance details I couldn't recall seeing years ago.

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VERNON YOUNG

International Film: Tensions and Pretensions

We must credit François Truffaut with at least a suppressed anxiety for the future of human liberties; otherwise we cannot explain his wanting to make a movie of *Fahrenheit 451*. To be sure, he may have needed an excuse for playing with fire-engines or for indulging his peculiar fidelity to that deck steward among the diabolists, Alfred Hitchcock. In either case, Ray Bradbury's novel was far from the inevitable choice. We may think of that novel as *kitsch*, a world removed from the canny presentiments of Orwell's *1984;* none the less it is *kitsch* in a good cause, it touches the life-and-death ideas; it is sufficiently persuasive to make us look out of the window to see if the expected glacier has arrived at the end of the street. And oddly enough it is more cinematic than Truffaut's film: the images on the screen—except for Oskar Werner's playing of Montag—are inadequate to the suggestions provoked by many pages of the book. Truffaut reduced the terror and provided nothing sanguinary in its stead. As "science-fiction" the film is uninventive (the least of my complaints), as a suspense story it is hampered at the outset by more serious moral stakes and mocked when all is over by a "camp" curtain-call, entirely out of keeping with the nightmare we have agreed to believe in up to that moment. Incomprehensibly, Truffaut devaluated Bradbury's effects at every level. A world in which books are hunted out and burned for fear of the ideas and associative emotions they give rise to is a world with its back already broken, a penal colony awaiting final extinction (which, in the novel, takes place). The society shown us by Truffaut, however, seems merely circumscribed, despite dark hints of constant surveillance; while nobody must read a book it is yet possible for reading-societies to survive illicitly and for anyone to talk as fearlessly (if as stiltedly) as the lamb-eyed ingenue played with understandable remoteness by Julie Christie. In the book, when Montag desperately tries to arouse buried human responses from a trio of bourgeois housewives, he reads from Matthew Arnold's poem, "Dover Beach"; in the film, from *David Copperfield!* Bradbury has a talkative spokesman named Faber who makes it clear that books were wonderful not so much for their expression of precepts or cosmic ideas as for the eloquence with which they had conserved the contingent values, the texture and sight of familiar things, the irreducible sentiments evoked by a million fabulous objects in nature or created by social man. Faber is eliminated in the movie and has not been replaced by the camera. Never for a single moment in this imperilled world does Truffaut dwell on the flight of a bird, a

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blade of grass, a packet of old letters, a dripping tap, tea-leaves in a cup, the sound of distant bells. He is so intent on the single *gimmick,* the destruction and recovery of books, that he fails to endow his characters with primary sensuous equipment. (Montag's attempt to reclaim his wife from sexual frigidity is not developed—perhaps it was just as well.) To a degree, the hazard was built in: once you have insisted on stepping through the looking-glass you have lost touch with your controllable milieu. Bradbury's novel was set in a nebulous America of the future. Truffaut wanted to make the film in England (with an Austrian hero) and his natural frame of reference is French. The result is not strange enough: just a middle-class Everyland under a reign of terror whose agents are audibly British. One noticeably bizarre preference emerges from this uneasy alliance. Truffaut tries hard to be representative when choosing the titles for all those books burning in *montage* but it seemed to me that an inordinate number of them were Twentieth-Century French, and I'm hanged if the accumulated wisdom of the human mind is very acutely inferred by the bric-a-brac of Jean Cocteau and the autobiography of Salvador Dali. . . . The end of civilisation doesn't arrive in Truffaut's version. Instead, the hero and that girl escape, all too easily, to an idyllic woodland (England—and it isn't even raining!) where an unmolested colony of omnivorous readers are committing their favourite books to memory for the benefit of posterity—confident that there will *be* a posterity! I should be gratified, I suppose, by the evidence that Truffaut is not a *thoroughly* frightened man. Yet it would have increased the tension of his film if he were. I'm prepared to see the destruction of mankind played as a savage farce (cf. *Dr. Strangelove*), since so final an event may as well be laughed at (our final gallantry), but the prospect of humanity living mindlessly and insensibly, forever, in a setting that resembles the sleeping-suburbs of Stockholm does not, to my way of thinking, lend itself to frivolous treatment!

Truffaut can still draw on a fund of good intentions, which may be why his film has been accepted with more generosity than not; I think we all agree that the thoughtful young man who made *The 400 Blows* and the bright young man who made *Jules and Jim* is securely on the side of the angels. No such benefit of the doubt can be extended to those Swedish directors responsible for a half-dozen or more films made within the last three years, now being distributed to the "art" cinemas of the world. Whatever causes may be finally assigned to the essential impotence of these films, errors of love are not among them. Swedish film, with the honorable exceptions I am always eager to single out, is loveless and is every bit as remote from credible daily life today or yesterday as *Fahrenheit 451* or any lesser science-fiction fantasy. Donner's *Here Begins Adventure,* Sjöman's *My Sister, My Love,* Mai Zetterling's *Loving Couples* and *Night Games,* Abramson's *The Serpent,* Halldoff's *The Myth,* Mattsson's *Nightmare* and *The*

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Murderer: among these (whether promoted as works of art or merely-commercial entertainments) it might be difficult to decide which is the most preposterous (i.e. the least authentically motivated). Mai Zetterling's *Night Games* has strong competition from the Sjöman and Abramson films for the title of Most Indecent, but it has no rival as the most reminiscent job of them all. There is scarcely a sequence that doesn't remind one (uncomfortably) of Fellini's *8-1/2* and *Juliet of the Spirits,* of Buñuel's *The Destroying Angel,* of Bergman's *The Silence* and of Miss Zetterling's previous effort which was in turn an anthology of effects from all the best Swedish films of the last fifteen years. Even more anxiously than in the earlier film, Mai Zetterling makes it clear in *Night Games* that she is never going to forgive God for having made her a woman and for not supplying her with a rotting upper-class family. To repair the latter deficiency she has invented one—very poorly. Her sexually impotent hero is a country gentleman (of a sort), very nasty to women, who discovers with the help of encircling flashbacks—the moviemaker's dynamic substitute for the static couch—that the *real* source of his affliction (now, you won't tell anyone who hasn't seen the movie, will you?) is that he was sexually fixated *on his mother!* The ending is in a classic mode, too—that of the pyromanic ritual. The enlightened victim sets fire to his villa, gives away his possessions and rolls happily on the ground with his mistress—potent, if homeless. I confess that I was tempted to construe this as a political touch, an injunction from the Social Democrats: "Let's burn up the past and copulate in the snow!" . . . I have implied that the film was derivative. I overlooked Miss Zetterling's two conspicuous contributions to fearless film-making: a publicly conducted *accouchement* and a steady glimpse of a naked boy with an erection. To a *New York Times* interviewer Miss Zetterling complained, "Some people seem to have thought this film was erotic."

As unlikely as it may seem, a judgment by Matthew Arnold on the prose of Macaulay is an accurate description of many Swedish films: "the external characteristic being a hard metallic movement with nothing of the soft play of life, and the internal characteristic being a perpetual resemblance of hitting the right nail on the head without the reality." One usually exempts the films of Ingmar Bergman from the generic character of the Swedish cinema. But I wonder how far *Persona* can be said to transcend it? To the extent that Bergman *is* an artist, of perennial powers, and the others, at their best, simply craftsmen? That should serve as a primary distinction. The chances are that a Bergman film will be worth attending, even if it incidentally exasperates, because the man, himself, is consistently driven by a force, a something, he doesn't understand, and the films he makes are often marvelous clarifications of what, at the moment, through a particular film, he has managed to understand. I can't make this claim for *Persona.* His intentions, if I have even half understood

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them, strike me as being unprofitable, his execution of them aggravating in the extreme.

Somewhere at the still centre of *Persona*—if you can overtake it, undistracted by the whirligig *montage* of the Paris school to which he has now cravenly conceded—there is a suggestively analytic depiction of what we might call the nuclear fission of a soul. What we at first believe we are seeing is a case of transference: a nurse takes on her patient's traumatic burden and is soon in worse case than the patient. That this level of interpretation will not serve is confirmed by the increasing instability of the closeups; the faces are conjoined like those of lovers or of blind twins in a womb; they waver, they divide, they half-merge, they fuse. We then revise our conception to accept the probability that there is only *one* woman involved here; the other is the *persona* (the mask or the projected antagonist) of the first. Elisabet Vogler, an actress suffering from a breakdown which appears to have rendered her speechless, has contrived a fantasy figure, the nurse Alma (= soul) in order to tell herself the otherwise unwelcome truth about the radically histrionic basis of her existence. She learns the truth, and presumably carries on (by assimilating it or concealing it we never know), while Alma, completely voided, takes flight in a state of incoherence. It is almost equally plausible to read the clues in reverse order; Alma has conjured an invalid towards whom she can assume an adoptive, superior pose; when her mechanism of self-aggrandizement breaks down, her complacency is fatally disturbed in a crisis of self-exposure.

I might have been impressed by Bergman's table-tennis had he been content with the double gambit which was already more than enough to assimilate. However, with special assistance from the interjected bits and pieces, many from Bergman's films, that disrupt the equivocal contest (film igniting, studio sounds, glimpses of the camera, documentary shots of butchery and war), the struggle between Elisabet and Alma is ostensibly being heightened (perhaps mocked) by the universal discord. At the same time, a quasi-Pirandello comment is being offered on the absurdity of art (i.e. movie-making) as a paradigm of life. Furthermore, the guiding threads in this labyrinth can most readily be grasped by those with a swift recall of the director's earlier films. When Alma confronts Elisabet Vogler in the hospital with her failure to substitute the reality of theatre for the simulations of life and when, at the beach house, she discovers, by reading the diary, how dispassionately she is being observed by her patient, the filmgoer who remembers that Vogler was the name given to the artist-figure (also publicly mute) in *The Magician* is likely to be the first to recognize the super-subject of *Persona:* the predatory nature of the artist, who can survive only by feeding on the tribulations of others.

For me, the sophistry of the message is not dispelled by the complexity of the treatment. As a good Lutheran, Bergman seems peculiarly obedient to a text of St. Jerome: "The proper business of a monk is

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not to instruct but to mourn." For some years now Bergman has been mourning on two counts: because God is silent and because the art of film-making has not satisfied his thirst for salvation. Both demands are theologically outrageous and philosophically absurd. I learn from Mircea Eliade that certain African tribes are also puzzled by their belief in a *deus absconditus;* they meet the situation by periodically sacrificing a white cock. As to the notion that art is inadequate for expressing the accumulated misery of human existence, this could come only from a mind in which all perspective is undergoing attrition. Who has ever supposed that art had such potency? While this and other familiar obsessions introduced into the film are personal to Bergman they are not unconnected with a rootedly disingenuous habit of the Swedish mind, the pose of refusing to acknowledge a law of ecology: that all life feeds on other life. We begin by feeding on our mothers (and I wouldn't have it any other way). You can see how the national disbelief supports the issue of neutrality, though, can't you? And you will note how it accounts for the temper of the Swedish film. Immaculate surface, maculate content. Genuinely creative aggression is converted into sado-masochism. Nine out of ten Swedish films are animated by "failure of communication," untransfigured sex, suicide, violent death, incest or insanity.

The tenth does arrive, praise the Hidden God! This year it was Jan Troell's *Here Is Your Life,* appearing in mid-winter like a warm river irresistibly breaking through the ice. With a single giant stride Troell has overtaken the three modern masters of the Swedish film—Sjöberg, Sucksdorff and Bergman. He's in their debt, of course, he has learned their territory; but he has been looking almost as steadily in the direction of France. (One sequence is bodily lifted from Truffaut's *Jules and Jim.)* These are idiomatic borrowings, only; in the sweep of the film (it's nearly three hours long) they are subordinated—the *feeling* is refreshingly personal. What is more, it conveys affection, a rare virtue in these latitudes. Troell is an original, in the only way possible. He has returned to the source. *Here Is Your Life* (the very title is a challenge) must seem to be a counsel of desperation to those film-makers who believe that the road to Internationalism runs through Carthage. Troell has not snubbed his own experience, the only authentic material he has to grow on. He has adapted two novels of an autobiographical work written by Eyvind Johnson in the Thirties which exemplify a pioneer Swedish subject, the self-discovery, within regional limits, of an adolescent boy during the First-War years. Young Olof takes on a succession of rough-and-humble jobs. He experiences the rigours and the rewards of hard-collar Capitalism, he is seduced by the promise (as in a glass darkly) of doctrinaire Marxism, he learns something of the lineaments of love—no less from a carnival-queen hussy than from tearful, floppy-hatted farmgirls. His bucolic education takes place on a small stage, a province of northern Sweden, given epic dimensions by Troell's respect for the subjective

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value of every transition in the boy's environment. At the end of the film Olof is following the railroad track—alone with his barely-injured innocence—footing it southward across a pelagic waste of snow, headed for The City and the perils of maturity.

Here Is Your Life is creative provincialism. Troell has not hesitated to embrace the parent rituals, neither shuddering nor weeping. In his own habitat, where the whine of the sawmill and the cry of the curlew have not been struck from the calendar, he is doing what Fellini did in *I Vitelloni,* what Truffaut did in *The 400 Blows*—and Kurosawa, in *Stray Dog.* He is discovering the common denominator for whatever worlds thereafter he may find provocation for exploring. Critics make it easy for themselves by classifying every good cinematographer as a poet. Troell photographed and edited his own film (he's 35 and this is his first feature-length work); his poetry is visible enough in a dozen dazzling sequences, colour as well as black-and-white, but his master gift is perhaps his unfaltering balance of the workaday detail with the cadence in which a life-illumination is being concentrated, even as it vanishes into the flux: the death of a friend, the ill memories of old age, the fuss and feathers of love-making, the shock of acquiring personal authority. Troell is as weather-wise as Sucksdorff and as intent on undertones as Bergman can be (in *The Virgin Spring,* for example). Films based obediently on narratives that impel their heroes from A to Z, opening sociological doors on the way, are usually interminable and homiletic. You find yourself counting the landings as you follow. There is no prose footage in *Here Is Your Life;* no encounter is a mere linkage to move the story from one place to the next. Every image has its due value and every sequence the rhythm and duration which seem proper to it. Everything is *movie* and all of it has the charm of Impressionism: a social context analyzed by an eye unusually alive to the vibrations of the transitory. If I have ignored the many actors without whom the film wouldn't have been what it is, that's high praise actually. They are all perfect, coming and going as if they'd never heard of making a movie, doing what comes naturally.

Sweden has found its Troell. France has its Reichenbach, its Bourguignon and its Truffaut (errors of commission allowed for). A few years back Italy had De Seta and Olmi, at present in abeyance—but Italy is always fertile. England has no Troell; only the Beatles and some rancidly articulate T.V. programs. One overhears much talk on B.B.C. about the contemporary British renaissance in cinema, which usually turns out to mean all those promising young men making false alarums when they mean nothing but a May-game (*Darling, Alfie, Morgan, Georgie Girl,* et al.). I suppose the "English" film of the year was Antonioni's *Blow-Up* in which he transported his customary dialectic between people and their décor to the shabbiest purlieus of London, with the usual meticulous preparation for a Second Coming which never takes place and, as ever, parsimonious hints

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of social disparities and metaphysical jests. As poetry, it's all texture, no core, and I'd have been more delighted, sequence by sequence, if I shared Antonioni's predilection for fuchsia (and the East End voice). Since the old master can't plot, he has this time used someone else's story, which takes an unconvincing final turn towards the equivocations of physics. If Antonioni (following the author?) is merely saying that the eye sees what it wants to see (a mini-truth—the eye is culturally conditioned), the body under the tree is far too palpable—in any case a strenuous way to illustrate the point. For the rest, his guard is down; he treats with fashion-photo affection the phenomena in which he once found cause for tears. *Blow-Up* is like the latest copy of *Vogue*. It commandeth the eye but sticketh not in the memory.

Germany is barren. Once in five years there's a German film worth importing. Last year, by rumour, there were two, of which, up to now, I've seen one, *Young Törless,* which received a special prize from the critics at Cannes. From *some* of the critics, I should say. Before Kenneth Tynan returned to a job he performs better (I trust), he delivered from Cannes, via *The Observer,* a number of last testaments to his uselessness as a film-spotter. Among them was the spiteful opinion that Volker Schlöndorff's film—which suggests that tyranny would not flourish if no victims offered themselves—was merely a belated apologia for the Third Reich.

Now, Tynan was in as informed a position as anyone to know that the novel from which Schlöndorff had composed his manuscript was written by Robert Musil in 1907, that of all Central-European writers of the time Musil is probably the last who could be accused of proto-Nazism, that furthermore the adaptation of his book today could scarcely reflect the desire of anyone associated with the film to rationalize the Late Events, the less so as one of the co-producers was the French director, Louis Malle. It seems to me that to make such a film requires more than ordinary courage, for the reflective nature of the problem expressed in it is too subtle to escape misunderstanding, a danger to which Tynan, for one, promptly exposed himself. My acquaintance with the literature of Musil is far from extensive. I assume that this novel represents a transitional, ruminating phase in his art, an exercise in nostalgia and a brooding re-examination of man's obligations to his fellows. The situation is thoroughly interrogative. At an Austrian cadets' training school, a plump and unprepossessing boy named Basini is brutally handled by a kangaroo court of his schoolmates, ostensibly because he has stolen money from one of them, certainly because he is disliked for his toadying manners. (There is more than a suggestion that he has not unwillingly served the sexual vice of a ringleader.) Törless, diffident and intellectual (acted gravely by Mattieu Carrière, who looks like a pre-Raphaelite angel), knows exactly what has transpired; he is a confidant of the bullies, he has taken a scholarly interest, you might say, in the phenomenon of Basini. When the students go wild and hang Basini by his heels in the

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gymnasium, the authorities, who then discover the extent of the persecution, want to know why young Törless, the model pupil, the paragon of sagacity and poise, had turned on his heel instead of reporting the whole dirty business to the masters. Törless explains, in effect, that there were too many ambiguities involved for him to choose right and wrong categorically. *In fact* the victim *was* a thief, and a coward as well; moreover, when Törless had sympathetically asked Basini how he *felt* at being humiliated and tortured, the wretched boy had blankly explained that *he didn't know how he felt*—he experienced nothing! On this note, with Törless returning home, the film ends.

A precarious offering to motion picture audiences, this; the subject is not one over which most people are inclined to temporize. They prefer to have their loyalties underlined for them and they're by no means prepared to consider a certain kind of vulnerability as among the deadly sins. This is a very muted film, altogether. Conventionally photographed and sedately paced, it implies the setting for a period within the confines of a single institution. I wish I could give it unreserved praise but the occasional music of Hans Werner Henze, one of those calculatedly unmelodic achievements of our advanced mode, irritated me no end, for it seemed to chill the air and was quite out of harmony with the time and tone of the story.

Since there have been more than a few hints, following the cry of "sentimental!" at Venice in 1965, that Akira Kurosawa will soon go the way of De Sica in the estimate of critics everywhere who are seized by a rage for optical novelty, this may well be my last chance to insist, with any hope of a hearing, that *Red Beard* is an overpowering experience. I recognize that fewer people all the time go to films wishing to be overpowered. Soon I'll have nobody to talk to! . . . When I first read a synopsis in praise of *Red Beard* (in *Japanese Quarterly*) I couldn't imagine why the author was enthralled. I can see now how difficult a film it is to write about if you expect to observe the proprieties of criticism. To analyze *Red Beard* with a view to impressing the academic filmgoer (thematic parallels, shot relationships, distribution of closeups and the like) or those who must be appealed to on sociological grounds (exposure of medieval conditions in a Tokugawa-period clinic) is in either direction bound to fall short of the mark. Kurosawa's art is principally the sum of his conviction. By now we can take for granted that he knows how to achieve the intensity at which he is aiming—aesthetic distance is not his ideal—and where to place the viewer whom he hopes to subjugate. I was subjugated by this film. A "detached appraisal" of it, two months after the event, is something I am unable to deliver.

Because, in truth, I felt myself being submerged during the running time of *Red Beard,* I tried desperately to keep my critical distance, but I was unequal to the resolve. I wanted to resist the nagging logic and the driving agony of the film, to quarrel with it, become bored by it, condescend towards it—just as one does when assailed by life, itself.

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And after every bout of fidgeting, sighing, and protesting under my breath, after every obstinate refusal to yield my sentiments any further, I was forced to give in and to return (fascinated) to the fray, to the importunate suffering, the hopelessness, the pity and the stench. Kurosawa's power over me was comparable to that of the doctor, "Red Beard," over the reluctant interne, Yasumoto. I felt restrained against my own will to live under ironclad restrictions among the sick and the mad in a cold bare cluster of frame buildings, as uninviting as so many rabbit hutches, in a cold, grubby, eternally cloud-wet landscape. (Nineteenth-century Japan? I might as well have been on the moon.) Like Yasumoto, I didn't *have* to stay; I had been tricked by my idiotic respect for the categorical imperative. And I doubt that others are as unaffected by this film as they may claim unless they are simply incapable of sustaining a three-hour movie with any capacity for attention (it's usually a problem for me; I demand a cigarette-break). I suspect that the normal strategy of the filmgoer who finds himself at the mercy of an emotion too painful to bear is to retreat beyond the peripheries of compassion or anger. By what means he manages to do this, I don't know. I don't think I really want to know.

That's the moral subject of the film, at any rate, as clearly as I can articulate it—Yasumoto's struggle against what fate and "Red Beard" have quietly decided. He is nearly assassinated by a mad nymphomaniac, he listens to stories of unbearable misfortune, he faints during an operation (perfectly macabre scene!), he is given a nearly half-witted child, Otoyo, to restore to life, wants to be quit of that obligation but manages to fulfill it (with "Red Beard" rescuing him at the lowest depth) only to discover when he is finally free to leave this infernal outpost, that he no longer wants to, for his only freedom consists in doing what he must. When I left the cinema, after *Red Beard,* I knew that for some months any film that aimed at less would seem unworthy of my attendance. . . . To the suggestion that the film has its shortcomings I am not immune. I have not been entirely bereft of judgement. There were perhaps *too many* parenthetical stories in the first half; "Red Beard" vanquishing the defenders of the brothel with Judo was merely a handout to the *aficionado* of *The Seven Samurai;* the arrival of a small unfortunate boy whom the girl, Otoyo, can cherish in her turn was too neat by far—life seldom provides such timely diversions from misery. Even so, these were incongruities I noted with half a mind. Kurosawa's foundation is firm. By comparison with *Red Beard,* the artful nihilism of the New Japanese cinema —judging by the productions I have seen—as well as the finicky pessimism of such a film as *Persona,* are luxuries of the spirit. Suffering is an absolute value, not to be impugned by democratic hedonism nor bewailed by accusing a God in hiding. Kurosawa's best films, and this is one of them, do what serious art has always done when engaged with the human condition. They challenge us to live authentically.

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JOHN SIMON

Theatre Chronicle

BRECHT'S *Galileo* is remarkable for several reasons. A comparatively compact play, it nevertheless covers vast ground; a relatively uncomplicated play, it says a great deal about politics, power, psychology, science, the workings of history; a seemingly historical play, it is intensely autobiographical, enlightening us about that curious, repellent and attention-riveting master that was its author. Brecht was a devious, rebarbative, inconsistent and infuriating creature, but through a maze of contradictions he managed to steer toward his own ultimate advantage in a world intellectually unreceptive, politically hostile, and historically cataclysmic. Like his Galileo, Brecht was never without a Scylla to his left and a Charybdis to his right. Like Galileo, he managed to save his skin and his work by means of all manner of unsavory maneuvers. Like his Galileo, he must have had his moments of self-hate though never of self-doubt. Like him, he was neither hero nor villain but both in one—in other words, a genius.

Consider this Galileo. Repeatedly we are told that he approaches truth and science as a voluptuary: "Knowledge will be a passion, and research sensual pleasure!" he exclaims, and also, "My sense of beauty would be offended if Venus in my cosmology were without phases." Brecht himself proclaimed in the *Kleines Organon,* "Do not forget it: he thinks out of voluptuousness." But despite or because of his sensualism, this man is an intellectual and dedicated champion of truth, his dedication sometimes taking the expedient form of servility, "A man like me can attain a halfway decent position only by crawling on his belly. And you know I despise people whose brains aren't capable of filling their stomachs." No one should expect this Galileo to die for the truth when he can, however duplicitously, live for it. Even though he declares, "Whoever doesn't know the truth is merely a fool. But whoever knows it and calls it a lie is a criminal!" he becomes just such a delinquent. But Brecht does not let us think of him so for long. When Andrea, the very disciple who turned most bitterly on his master for recanting, discovers that this act enabled Galileo to finish his invaluable *Discorsi,* he exults, "You hid the truth. From the enemy. Even in the field of ethics you were centuries ahead of us!"

At this point something amazing happens. The Galileo who just after the fateful moment topped Andrea's reproachful "Unhappy the country that does not have a hero!" with the brilliant "No, unhappy the country that needs a hero," is, in his old age, reviling his own strategy, praised though it now be by that very Andrea. "I consider it the sole aim of science," says the Galileo of Scene XIV, "to alleviate

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the arduousness of mankind's lot." Yet how dashingly the Galileo of Scene XI announced, "I have written a book about the mechanics of the universe, that is all. What is or isn't done with it is no concern of mine." What happened in between? Brecht became a more militant Communist and rejected Galileo's "bourgeois" compromise. Also, by the time the second version of the play was completed, the atom bomb had become a reality, and Brecht, not content with making Galileo step out of character, makes him glaringly step out of his period: "The gulf between you [scientists] and it [mankind] may someday become so great that your shout of joy about some new achievement may be answered by a universal cry of dismay." This is clearly a reference to the Bomb, and the parallel between the recanting Galileo and the militaristically exploited atomic scientist is implicit. But Brecht is being more than usually tendentious here: there is a huge difference between a scientist's denying the truth and giving up experimentation to satisfy a regressive and repressive Church, and a scientist's proceeding with his research even though he knows that it may lead to military devastation. If humanity is evil and stupid enough to destroy itself by discovering certain truths, it is not within the power of the individual scientist to prevent this, and there is some doubt about whether such a humanity is worth saving. Allowing the truth to knuckle under to dogma is something else again.

From the dramatic point of view, however, this reversal is not without interest: it can be taken as Galileo's self-hate at work. In any case, it is yet again reversed when Andrea, who has now been defending his old master, leaves for Holland with the *Discorsi* as precious contraband and says by way of a coded farewell, "Concerning your evaluation of the author we were discussing, I can't give you a reply. But I cannot imagine that your murderous analysis will be the last word on the matter." To which Galileo answers, "My sincerest thanks, Sir," and proceeds to consume a goose someone has sent him. I, in turn, cannot imagine that this last was not intended as a palinode's palinode: Galileo acquiescing in Andrea's view of the situation and, by immersing himself in gastronomic if not astronomic pleasure, reasserting his delight in sensual pursuits of which science was, for him, the foremost. So when Brecht, just before his death, told the actors he was directing in *Galileo* that the protagonist "must be shown as a social criminal, a total scoundrel," he knew what he was doing: while he, as author-director, was espousing the party line which called for heroes, his protagonist and play would be giving him—gloriously—the lie. Thus Galileo joins the company of such other Brechtian heroes as Mother Courage and Azdak, who cannot be taken at face value because the truth has more faces than one.

The production of *Galileo* at Lincoln Center is a cause for considerable jubilation: we can finally say of the Repertory Company, *"Eppur si muove!"* The second version of the play here used could

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have profited by judicious collating with the first and third, and by a little less wanton cutting, especially in the ballad singer scene. Yet the Laughton translation was, after all, supervised by Brecht, whose English was better than his machiavellianism would let on, and, as further adapted here, it is quite a good one. John Hirsch, whose direction was promising in *Yerma,* staged a clean and efficient production in which the rambunctious is generally controlled and the potentially static not permitted to sag, and which tends to adhere to the author's imaginative stage directions. But it is unfortunate that some of the play's intellectual values are allowed to get lost in the shuffle. Still, Hanns Eisler's catchy musical underpinnings are mostly there; and Robin Wagner's towering jungle gyms that frame the middle distance, and on which peripheral figures are sporadically perched, nicely suggest earthly if not celestial mechanics, and convey the drafts blowing from an open universe onto a no longer fixed earth. There is also much wonderfully bizarre period astronomical equipment, and James Heart Stearns's costumes are adequate, though those for some of the higher prelates deviate into high camp.

Most of the acting is at least functional, although the comedienne Estelle Parsons is miscast as the pathetic Virginia, and among several hams Charles Siebert, as her fiancé, and Edgar Daniels, as a ballooning cardinal, are the worst. Zestful contributions are made by Philip Bosco and Robert Symonds, but Shepperd Strudwick, though he looks just right as the Cardinal Inquisitor, continues his long career of colorlessness. That brings us to Anthony Quayle's Galileo: dependable, assured, meticulous in elocution, and ultimately unexciting. Quayle has a provocative all-purpose slouch and a serviceable pucker of the eyes and areas adjoining, but he never ventures far beyond this utility base, and his performances, instead of gallant conquests of uncharted seas, are mere *periploi.* Still, one is thankful that the originally scheduled Rod Steiger did not do the part: better make Galileo than the entire audience quail.

The skill with which Brecht has us participating in the not readily dramatizable excitement of scientific discovery is surpassed by his ability to create suspense where none can really exist. The scene in which the daughter and assistants of Galileo await with profound but conflicting emotions whether he will recant or die a martyr like Giordano Bruno—if he forswears his discoveries, there will be a great tolling of bells—is every bit as breathtaking and shattering as if we did not know the outcome. But it was shocking to hear an audience that, all along, had accompanied the play with little clucks of hindsighted self-righteousness (applauding hardest when reason seemed triumphant, though there is little doubt about whose side they would have been on at the time), burst into laughter at the sound of the bells. Still, what is one to expect from an audience having for supreme mentor Walter Kerr, whose two reviews of *Galileo* were masterpieces of cantankerous

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niggardliness: he actually complained that Brecht did not dwell at length on the differences between old-style and new-style chess, or let us peer through the various telescopes, which would have made this, for Kerr, a much better play.

But Kerr, like all other reviewers, was lavish with praise for a piece of shoddy goods called *You Know I Can't Hear You When the Water Is Running* by Robert Anderson, whose career in the theatre began with the meretricious success of *Tea and Sympathy* and proceeded through a string of well-merited flops to this foursome of tawdry one-acters. In the first, a puritanic young playwright insists that the producer keep in his play a scene in which an actor walks about naked, while the worldly producer argues against it, and a desperate actor proves only too willing to oblige. This purports to be a stinging comment on the new realism in the performing arts, about which, however, it says nothing; it is really, like most of the evening, an excuse for a cento of clean dirty jokes. The second play has a middle-aged husband and wife bickering in the bedroom furniture section of a department store about whether they should switch to separate beds; a faggoty salesman and a floppy girl who limbers up the husband's libido provide padding for the bedding humor ("The family that lies together dies together"). The third episode, about the evils of sedulous sex education in a typical middle-class family tries to be serious as well as funny and succeeds in being mawkish ("Suppose they couldn't find a drugstore open—as we couldn't, if you will recall. . . ." "There's nothing wrong with it [masturbation], except that it's awfully lonely"). The last play concerns a superannuated married couple who reminisce about their sex lives and cannot get anything straight, not even whom they are married to now. This is supposed to be theatre of the absurd, of which it is known that it originated in vaudeville; but its achievement was to rise above its origins, to which Anderson handily returns it.

Beneath all these smirking but anodyne, tasteful little tastelessnesses ("All I know is that if I had known earlier in our marriage the peculiar little things you like . . ." [aposiopesis, naturally, the author's]) there is a solidly retrograde mentality at work, whose aim is to titillate the audience while in the same breath assuring it that the author is, at bottom, for all the middle-class virtues and art forms, and finds sex more honored in the breeches than in the observable. The trouble with some masturbation is that, so far from being lonely, it is communal, acclaimed, and supremely lucrative.

A different, though scarcely more compelling, sexuality informs Norman Mailer's adaptation of his novel, *The Deer Park,* which illustrates usefully the cleft in Mailer's writing. On one hand there is the by now duly recognized journalist of verve and talent; on the other, the still not properly assessed novelist of verve and very little talent. So desperately eager are we for substantial novelists in our

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post-Faulkner era, that we are fanatically loath to relinquish hope in a Mailer, a Baldwin, and many even less likely pretenders, compared to whose chances those of the Bourbons and Hapsburgs to regain their thrones are positively rosy. The one defense consistently advanced in Mailer's behalf as a creative writer is his energy, but no amount of it is going to extricate an author who has stuffed himself into *An American Dream,* which is not a novel but an orgone box.

In *The Deer Park,* there are shrewd bits of observation about the ubiquitous chicaneries, colossal viciousness, and bottomless dishonesty of Hollywood, recorded from life by an alert reporter with radar eyes and sonar ears; there is also enough pseudo-tough, pseudo-poetic maundering about art, love, and sex to make the staunchest sophomore giddy. Examples of the former: A ghastly Louis B. Mayer figure who, among other things, bullies a homosexual actor and a nymphomaniac star into a publicity marriage with the most nauseating apple-pie-pieties ("You think you can buy good publicity? Good publicity is a gift of God!"), and his more forthrightly crass son-in-law who wants to produce "something with angels' voices in the background, only not full of shit!" These figures and some others are aptly drawn, and their almost innocent monstrosity is as funny as it is fearsome.

But then comes the other Mailer, with a dreary triangle involving a brilliant director who was ruined by blacklisting (even unbrilliant ones, in real life, were not); a marginal actress, his off-and-on mistress, whose life's work seems to be the search for the non-stop orgasm; and a vile pimp who lusts after both of them but succeeds only, occasionally, with the girl. Here Mailer indulges in philosophizings such as these: "Love may be murder and murder an act of love. . . . As if Elena were not only my woman but my balm. . . . You don't want me and yet you want every bit of me. . . . You're the only woman who has made me cry more than once, so, yes, let's get married. . . . I worship you—it's better with you than it is with anyone. . . . We have to take it from each other: to dare the fury of the murderous——"In this last quotation I cannot read my own jotting: the final word may be "heart," "beast," or "cunt," but the statement is, I dare say, equally profound with any of the three endings. When you further consider that the play is in eighty-eight scenes and has a framework which assures us that the locale is Hell and these are the Damned, and that Mailer plainly wants us to take this literally, you get some idea of the pretentiousness and vapidity of the proceedings. But it must be stated that Rip Torn, Will Lee, and Mickey Knox give juicy performances, and that Leo Garen's direction could be a great deal worse.

About *MacBird* so much has been written by now, and so much more will be by the time these pages are printed, that I find it hard to forestall a sense of *déjà lu.* Lacking the charming optimism of my friends Robert Brustein and Dwight Macdonald, I cannot perceive in *MacBird* the rebirth of political satire, an almost extinct bird in the Ameri-

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can theatrical landscape; but neither, on the other hand, can I condone Walter Kerr's belittling of the play. *MacBird* is neither a macphoenix nor a macturkey: it is a piece of exuberant collegiate fun, based on a very clever idea and executed with much skill and not a little sloppiness. The anxious pleas that Mrs. Garson does not really mean that Johnson murdered Kennedy seem to me as supererogatory as the hopes that this will prove the fountainhead of a new kind of theatre seem premature. The blending of Shakespearean language with various forms of contemporary idiom produces some genuine merriment, but if we have laughed at MacBird's "This here is the winter of our discontent," we are no longer likely to do so at his "This here's a solemn moment." Though we may be amused by "sweet chuck" becoming LBJ-ified into "sweet woodchuck," when we get something like "Stars, hide thy fires! . . ." we are almost more offended than entertained.

Still, *MacBird* must, I suppose, be considered from the point of view of its political efficiency first, and here its greatest strength is also its ultimate weakness. It must be said for Barbara Garson that her virulence is directed at everyone; rather than being a mere anti-Johnsonian, she is almost equally antipathetic to all: LBJ, JFK, Bobby, Teddy, Stevenson, Morse, beatnik demonstrators, old-time leftists, militant Negroes—anyone who gets involved in politics. While this lifts the play above propaganda, it also projects it into a realm of nihilism where greater powers than the author possesses are required to avert a feeling of window-smashing for its own sake. There may be something liberating about breaking windows from within to let in fresh air, but *MacBird* as often smashes them schoolboyishly from without, proclaiming things to be equally foul on both sides of the pane. To carry this off, Mrs. Garson's satire lacks sufficient stature. Discontent can afford to be sophomoric; despair must be Swiftian to score.

Nevertheless, there is fun to be had from this production, in which the leading parts of MacBird and Robert Ken O'Dunc are manfully handled by Stacy Keach and William Devane, especially the latter, who manages to look and sound awesomely like his prototype. And indeed a germ of meaning does emerge thanks in part to their able playing: that in politics both stupid cunning and shrewd cleverness are sinister, whereas other modes are not even operative. Unfortunately, the rest of the cast is, at best, undistinguished, and, at worst, inept; but Roy Levine (with help from Gerald Freedman) has directed with brio, the scenery and music are helpful, and Jeanne Button's costumes, of a style describable as moth-eaten Wagnerian, just right. I particularly relish a stuffed, deciduous eagle MacBird carried about as a scepter, and the Wayne of Morse's lance that looked like the perfectly preserved backbone of a brontosaurus that died of rickets.

Great white outrage-hunters might more properly be directed to *Gorilla Queen,* an off-off-Broadway hit that managed to shed one of its

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off's, but remains, farther uptown, as off-color as before. A faggoty travesty of African adventure movies, it is a curious combination of nastiness and innocence. What is especially nasty about it is its abortive puns; and it is particularly innocent of talent. The author, Ronald Tavel, a former "scenarist" for Andy Warhol, has a sporadic eye and ear for campy gags, and nothing much else. His dialogue is chiefly on the level of "It's a veritable horny of plenty," "Perhaps some liquor?—Lick her? Where?" and "I could eat the cottage cheese out of a dead gibbon's jockstrap." The two best puns, out of several hundred tries, are "deus ex mattachine" (after the homosexual Mattachine Society, which has already booked the theatre for a theatre party) and, a reference to dancing gibbons, "choreography worthy of Cunningham Lingus." My objection is not to homosexual humor as such—art may occasionally hold up a rear-view mirror to life—though too much of any one thing at the exclusion of all else palls quickly; the trouble with the two and a half hours of *Gorilla Queen* is too much homosexual and not enough humor. The production, moreover, is slow and amateurish, the worst in an undistinguished cast being the author's brother.

But at least this extravaganza about a gay gorilla, Queen Kong, and his entourage is what it says it is. Peter Shaffer's *Black Comedy* is not black but grey, not comedy but farce. I am speaking of the title play now, the longer item on this double bill, in which a bunch of ill-assorted people carry on hectically during a power failure when we are to imagine the scene blacked out, though it is, in fact, brightly lit. This clever device, cleverly borrowed from ancient Chinese drama, is put to some fairly funny use by Shaffer, and was, I am told, hilarious when put on at England's National Theatre. Here, with Lynn Redgrave being excessively oafish as a debutante, Donald Madden only passable as a prissy homosexual, Geraldine Page less than convincing as a cast-off mistress come back to haunt her Lothario, and Peter Bull much too flabby as the deb's colonel father (can you imagine Franklin Pangborn playing C. Aubrey Smith?), things emerge only moderately mirthful. Nonetheless, under John Dexter's choreographic direction, the acrobatic Michael Crawford does a competent job as the unfortunate artist whose place turns into a comic Black Hole of Calcutta.

The curtain raiser, *White Lies,* is rather more what it says it is. It is a white, anemic little play, and as for any bearing on reality, it is pretty nearly all lies. It does, however, serve one melancholy function. Geraldine Page plays in it a phoney baroness and phoney clairvoyante with a phoney accent; she manages none of these, but convinces me thoroughly of her factitiousness as an actress. Miss Page has learned exactly nothing since her first success in *Summer and Smoke* fifteen years ago, and is still, whatever her assignment, playing that part in that play. Though her acting has not grown, her mannerisms have, and these, on a not so young woman and reiterated for the *n*th time,

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have become exasperating. They are so indistinguishable from travesty that when Miss Page resorts to deliberate caricature (as, for instance, in a few moments in these plays, and throughout her recent movie, *You're a Big Boy Now*), the result is, to put it as mildly as possible, an exaggeration that has no longer anything to do with acting. To paraphrase *Galileo,* unhappy the land that needs such a dramatic heroine; or, more properly perhaps, unhappy the theatre that must call this one of its foremost stars.

Two musicals, *Sherry!* and *Illya Darling* are interesting only as examples of titular over- or underpunctuation. The former is based on *The Man Who Came to Dinner,* but what of its model's dubious humor time has not staled, the adaptation has. Most remarkable about this lackluster and synthetic affair are James Lipton's lyrics, whose flatfootedness surpasses, or underpasses, even the last all-time low, Joe Darion's for *Man of La Mancha.* Well, Darion is at it again in *Illya Darling,* Jules Dassin's wretched adaptation and misdirection of his film, *Never on Sunday.* Although the film was sleazy and trashy, it was at least illuminated by the zest of Melina Mercouri as its heroine; the consistently appalling musical also stars a Melina Mercouri, but she is only a namesake or a cartoon version of the other. Seven years (and with Dassin, at that) have made a difference, alas; what was earthily peasanty then has become irksomely *faisandé,* brashly coy. For example, the marathon smile, which used to be infectious, has become infected, a case of laughing gas-poisoning; the awe-inspiringly architectural teeth, which threaten to Fletcherize us, look even from the last row of the orchestra like a set of triglyphs that have chewed up their metopes. Marguerite Duras has asserted of Miss Mercouri, "She stands naked at the center of the world." If Copernicus and Galileo must have lived in vain, and we must revert to a Ptolemaic universe, let it be for something more interesting than Melina Mercouri standing in a bikini at the center of the Mark Hellinger's stage.

There was an unpleasant surprise coming to those who imagine that British repertory theatre or British Shakespeare productions are *ipso facto* superior to our own bunglings in these areas. The Bristol Old Vic's *Hamlet, Romeo,* and *Measure for Measure* (though you would not have known it from the respectful, even cringing, reviews) were about as humdrum, provincial, cheerlessly designed and poorly acted theatricals as you can find in some of our larger parks between New York and San Diego, and suitable only to put the fear of the Bard into our bright-eyed youngsters. Of particular, though horrible, interest was Tyrone Guthrie's staging of *Measure for Measure,* which reduced that metaphysical near-tragedy to babbling burlesque. Claudio's great outcry of anguish, poetry as uprooting as anything in Shakespeare, was played for laughs, and the Duke was turned into a comic character. But as the buffoon who portrayed him bore a marked physical resemblance to Sir Tyrone, even this *Measure* was, in its way, concerned with the meting out of justice.

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A case of flagrant injustice, however, was the rapid demise of Jules Feiffer's *Little Murders.* This was a bloody-minded play, boldly proclaiming that our irrational and vicious society turns ordinary people into maniacal murderers. Feiffer elected to write in a style midway between absurdist farce and social satire, and to proceed from something seemingly zany but harmless to sheer grotesque horror. It may be that there was too much farce in the first act, so that the shift in the second was too sudden. It is certain that Feiffer is best at comic set pieces that sometimes fall flat and usually run on too long, and that the play tended to break into a series of vignettes without a continuous line of plot or character development. But this is not really what the reviewers held against it. Rather it was the fact that it had the courage of its bleak, misanthropic view of life—or, at least, life hereabouts; that it dared pronounce the joke a hideous reality—this is what doomed it. Accordingly, the first, funny, act was overpraised, and the second, frightening, one unanimously and excessively jumped on. *Little Murders* was a thoroughly uneven play, but with several very funny patches in it, and with the lopsided vigor of a sick joke that strikes at the root of some hidden, diseased truth. That it should have closed in a week while pseudo-meaningful and unfunny trash flourishes, is one of those medium-to-large murders in which Broadway specializes.

Letters to the Editor

Sir:

Vernon Young bases some of his objections to my book *A World on Film* (Spring 1967) on my alleged factual inaccuracy. He mentions four points; I have been able to check two of them without seeing again the films in question.

In discussing Buñuel's *Viridiana,* I referred to the uncle's natural son. Says Young: "As I recall the moment, the *nephew* (he is not the aristocrat's son). . . ." Says John Russell Taylor, synopsizing the story in *Cinema Eye, Cinema Ear* (p. 109): "Viridiana and her cousin Jorge, her uncle's illegitimate son. . . ." Says Ado Kyrou in *Luis Buñuel* (p. 88): "Jorge, the illegitimate son of Don Jaime. . . ."

Speaking of Bergman's *The Virgin Spring,* Young says: "Kauffmann grossly misrepresents the vengeance scene. . . . Kauffmann describes it as pandemonium, complains that it is altogether too protracted and ridicules its plausibility on the grounds that the father and mother get in each other's way during the killing!" Here is my complete comment on the scene:

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> The vengeance scene is so long that it verges on the ridiculous. The father and mother enter the murderers' chamber, fasten locks, take bags from one man's arms, slam a knife into a table, yet the sleepers never stir. Then the father wakes them and has to kill them separately. Theatrically and otherwise, it is an irrational scene.

Readers may judge whether I have described it as "pandemonium." And where have I said that the father and mother get in each other's way?

In his next paragraph Young says: ". . . I doubt that Kauffmann himself cares whether or not he reported the scene accurately." In view of Young's accuracy, this slur (can it be called anything else?) has its funny side.

STANLEY KAUFFMANN

Brooklyn, New York

Sir:

Concerning *Viridiana,* I haven't, myself, had immediate opportunity to re-check the identity of the man played by Francisco Rabal. However, since other viewers in Stockholm assure me that he was the grandee's nephew, it is conceivable that the Swedish sub-titles were inaccurate or missed a nuance! In which case, Mr. Kauffmann has my apology, though he surely realizes that this was a minor element in the misinterpretation of *Viridiana* with which I charged him. . . . As for *The Virgin Spring,* I didn't *quote* him directly. I *summarized* what appeared to be his conclusion. If that scene *had* transpired as Kauffmann thought he saw it, with Father and Mother *both* entering the *stuga,* fastening locks, taking bags from the sleepers and slamming a knife into the table, the net effect, when the guilty three awakened, *would have been* pandemonium—and man and wife would certainly have been in each other's way! The quibble is important. The whole sequence, taking it back to the woman's revelation to her husband that their guests are the murderers of their daughter, is executed with ritualistic precision, complete plausibility and, as I remarked in my review, strict economy. Incidentally, it *is* Von Sydow's plunging of the knife into the table which—after it has penetrated his consciousness—awakes one of the murderers. I can only reiterate that if Mr. Kauffmann still believes he has given a valid description of this scene and an adequate interpretation of its position within the film's denouement, he owes it to himself to see the film again.

VERNON YOUNG

Lidingö, Sweden

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WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

Poetry Chronicle

"THE FACT REMAINS THAT WE ARE always fundamentally interested in what a writer has to say. When we are sure of that, we pay attention to the way in which he says it, not often before." Here is Wallace Stevens in his letters, making a remark that provokes the response, well—yes and no. Nobody wants to lecture Stevens on how form and content are inseparable, but it seems undeniable that becoming sure of what a writer has to say involves paying attention, at some level or other, to the way in which he says it. Terms like "personality" or "voice" are perhaps inclusive enough to make indivisible the way of saying from what's said; they allow us to be as aesthetic and as moral as we please in characterizing the fifteen volumes of this quarter. And although one can always find technical ways to rationalize a preference for one personality over another (*x*'s use of the caesura; *y*'s sensitive varying of the variable foot) it's not clear just what audience needs to be or is in fact convinced by such arguing. Let us ask instead, how attractive are the personalities created in these books of poems? At the outset: three first volumes.[1]

The new Yale "younger poet," James Tate, age 25, is pictured on the jacket with umbrella, rolled-up shirtsleeves, and richly-flowered long tie. Dudley Fitts praises his "effortless elegance of control . . . in diction and composition" but the word for him, as I see it, is sporty. Tate sits in his apartment, hears a pot fall next door, and knows what it means: "The neighbors on/ both sides of me suddenly/ realize that they have not/ made love to their wives/ since 1947." Or there is the revelation that "Tonight the loveliest woman/ in Altoona is giving herself/ to a dry-cleaning apprentice/ beneath swings in City Park." Tate has rather too much affection for the You Man poem—"So what do you do? What/ can you do? Leave the room/ altogether? Crazy."; and when tired of being a dandy he sometime just mutters. But he possesses and cultivates some lively fantasies that are mock-ingenuously presented through a deadpan tone. And in one poem about his dead father—"The Lost Pilot"—fancy becomes imagination as the voice speaks beautifully, moving over the lines with inevitable rightness.

There is a bit of the sport also in Marvin Bell, whose poem "The Delicate Bird Who Is Flying Up Our Asses" begins, candidly, "The

[1] THE LOST PILOT, by *James Tate*. Yale Series of Younger Poets. $3.75/$1.45. THINGS WE DREAMT WE DIED FOR, by *Marvin Bell*. The Stone Wall Press. $6.25. COLD WATER, by *Lou Lipsitz*. Wesleyan University Press. $4.00/$1.85.

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delicate bird who flies up your asses/ is flying up mine/ also. . . ." As might be gathered, Bell's poetry assumes that Bell is the measure of all things, and if this assumption has its limits it has its amusements too in "What I Did in Paris in the Twenties":

I lay around
I made my friends call me "Bell."
In the evenings, I went on record.
Sure as hell,
the folks home ate me,
drank, turned up hooked,
thought they were doing a Marvin
When they were only doing dirt.
I coined the phrase
"lost generation," it was so pithy . . .

But at other times the poet only does a Marvin, speaking out in relatively rough-and-ready lines about troubles on the homefront and prophesying ruin or success. The funnier these poems were, the better: see in particular "Half-Time Poems" and "People are Falling Off All the Time."

Lou Lipsitz teaches Political Science at North Carolina and tries to write poems as harsh and uncompromising as the title of his first book, *Cold Water,* would suggest. His subjects are impossible ones—Vietnam, the Watts riots, disturbed children; he gets along with a minimum of form except for some rather bothersome highjinks in which you have to turn the book sideways to read the poem. When a poem to Sean O'Casey begins by disposing itself on the page this way

Now Sean O'Casey
  is dead whose plays and stories go on
    proclaiming themselves
dragging us
    together. . . .

one feels the flame of Poetic Fashion on which some cold water could well be thrown; or when he writes the required "Skinny Poem" (one word to a line) we long for those fat old stanzas of Keats or Yeats. But there is one poem ("The Young Boy") in which, like James Tate, his voice sounds inevitable, natural, in harmony with the Voice of Poetry. I quote the first stanza:

Complete, his time come, he stood up
and felt how alien he'd grown.
The daylight broke into his secret room
like police detectives,

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and he stepped back
fearing the loss of what he'd been.

Here a subject is discovered and made affecting through a way of saying: personality and medium are one.

What principle of association is it that puts Lawrence Durrell[2] and Lou Lipstiz in the same review? Answer: they have produced slim volumes. *Ikons,* a title that doesn't exactly invite you in to roll up the carpets, has poems titled "Congenies," "Vidourle," "Poemandres," "Kasyapa" and, more vulgarly, "Leeches," all of which ask to be taken with a glass of brandy but incite to other action even less than most lyrics. There is nothing technically or morally adventurous about them: here, typically in "Persuasion" the toneless voice is at work understanding: "We aliens are too greedy. They took their time,/ Being sure there was abundance of such/ Blueness, waters of mint in sheaves, / Demotic and reasonable the sky through leaves." Once I realized how little concerned Durrell was with Speaking To Me, I sat back, read on and waited for something to happen. Not very much does, though on occasion the pose relaxes somewhat and a possibly irreverent person peeps through—"But water was only one of the things Leonardo/ Was keen on"—or, worse luck, there is a pitch for cosmic sex: ". . . he was touched/ By the sense of time's fragility, the semen of fate." The best poem in the book is one titled "Moonlight" which begins like this:

I cannot read Pliny without terror.
It seems that in trees the sap
Is moon-governed, rising and falling
In absolute surrender, and if trees
Then the menstrual pattern reconverts
Some rhythms into human sap
For the nights silver thermometer.

—and ends with a man standing at a gate in "some northern city of steel vegetation," a "besotted cistern/ For wine or blood, ebbing and flowing,"

Waxing and waning in the ungovernable fury
Of something's phosphorescence. Yet he waits,
He simply waits and smokes and goes on waiting,
You know why, you know when, you know for whom.

[2] THE IKONS, by *Lawrence Durrell.* E. P. Dutton. $3.50. A PRIVATE MYTHOLOGY, by *May Sarton.* W. W. Norton. $1.95. HALF SUN HALF SLEEP, by *May Swenson.* Scribner's. $4.50/$1.95. EXCURSIONS, NEW AND SELECTED POEMS, by *Katherine Hoskins.* Atheneum. $4.50/$1.95. A CHRIST OF THE ICE-FLOES, by *David Wevill.* St. Martin's. $3.95. NIGHT LIGHT, by *Donald Justice.* Wesleyan University Press. $4.00/$1.95. THE SORROW DANCE, by *Denise Levertov.* New Directions. $1.60. WORDS, by *Robert Creeley.* Scribner's. $4.95.

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I felt that I did, and that Durrell believed what he was saying.

May Sarton has taken a journey round the world and come back alive to tell us about it. In *A Private Mythology* she stands forth proudly as an oh-so-sensitive globe-trotting madam on whom not the least nuance of experience has been lost. Nothing human is alien to her, so she claims, and like all ladies she is particularly strong for Japan: "To come alone—so far—/ In middle age?/ I light a cigarette/ from the brazier at my side,/ Watching the smoke curl,/ And indulge in/ Endless speculations." These speculations are indulged in the presence of "Kyoko/ Apricot,/ Delicate, transparent/ As the flower of the tree." As might be expected, Kyoko "smiles/ Her ineffable smile" and in general makes everything rather swell: "We have learned to be silent,/ Kyoko and I." Nothing alien turns out to be quite human; as in her novels, Miss Sarton can be lordly, reverent and condescending by turns or all at once: "For the Japanese/ The nape of a neck/ May evoke passion." Lines like those made me feel very paleface and uninstructed, something I felt like when in a matchless fifties movie called "House of Bamboo," Shirley Yamaguchi told an American G.I. that she couldn't sleep with him until they were married, because of Japanese traditions that he, poor G.I., wouldn't understand. To be fair to her, Miss Sarton is impartial in her patronizing, as seen from a poem at the end of the book, "A Recognition." Subtitled "for Perley Cole," it celebrates the virtues of this extraordinary chap:

> I wouldn't know how rare they come these days,
> But I know Perley's rare. I know enough
> To stop fooling around with words, and praise
> The man who swings a scythe in subtle ways,
> And brings green order, carved out of the rough.

Needless to say she does not stop fooling around with words and by the end of the poem Perley has been transformed into Brancusi, in the course of which one more beautiful self-congratulatory object has been wrought. As Miss Sarton warns us herself, "The haiku/ Ends in mannerism."

May Swenson begins and ends in mannerism. She is forever tinkering, taking apart a cat, a watch, a poem. Without evident embarrassment she can tell us (in "The Watch") that the watchmaker ". . . leaned like an ogre over my/ naked watch. With critical pincers he/ poked and stirred. He/ lifted out little private things with a magnet too tiny for me/ to watch almost. 'Watch out!' I/ almost said . . ." I'm not just sure what kind of good fun this is. She is endlessly feeling things and relentlessly fashionable about what there is to grab: "On Handling Some Small Shells From the Windward Islands"—the pretentious-unpretentious title tells the story, as does the chic disposition of words on the page, not just in old-fashioned pentameter but like this:

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Their click as of crystal,
wood, carapace and bone.
A tintinabular fusion.
Their friction spinal and chill
as of ivory embryo
fragments of horn. . . .

And there are many flashier typographical effects to be observed, if not delighted in, elsewhere. For May Swenson things exist so that poems can be written about them, and if most things have been discovered there's always "A Basin of Eggs"; "Their cheeks touching,/ their cheeks being/ their bellies, their/ bellies being undimpled,/ dimples of dark being." I suppose so, but why couldn't they have been left alone just to lie there as boring old eggs, instead of taking their place in a hyped-up poetic universe? May Swenson has nothing to say, and her many ways of saying it drove me to exasperation.

Katherine Hoskins' poems demand patience in a reader, not for the sake of puzzling out hidden truths, buried lives, but the better to hear the poem move from line to line. Her voice is engaged but not excited; it claims our attention without making a fuss and leads us, often without our being quite aware of it, into a social relation.

All night we said, This violence
Of sledge-wind, stroke on stroke,
Will blast and up-end our noble, our heritage oak;
Will crash it—immense
Weight, length and leafage—onto the roof tree.
We'll be ruined surely. ("Honi Soit")

These white-clay pits of Byfield—
Small, intensively worked—
Scarcely disturbed the grass,
The woods not at all. There
Shadows changed the kilns
To grossly chimneyed castles,
Suitable for dwarves.
("The Byfield Rabbit")

These opening stanzas are enough to suggest Miss Hoskins's seriousness and flexibility in regard to matters of syntax; it is nice to take pleasure in an admirably used comma or dash, and her attentiveness pays off in the strength and control of the speaking voice created. There are moments when the air becomes too thoroughly small and dry, but the best of the new poems in this volume are poised and impersonal in their regard.

Another strongly syntactical poet is the thirty-one year old Canadian

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David Wevill, whose second book, despite its austere and chilly title, is impressively human. Wevill's poems are both elemental and self-absorbed, a combination achieved, as with Miss Hoskins but more intensely so, through full exploitation of the energies of line and sentences developing in time. Although he is concentrated and intense you rarely get the sense that he's working too hard in trying to hot it up with vivid concretions. There is a lovely adjustment of the claims between dream and fact in many of these poems; here is "Catkins" entire:

One of a thousand dust-blown, touch
Shrubs in high summer, the catkin in March
Is a nettle of reins in a white eyeball
Pricked red against the ghost birch-wood and flooded farmland.

Here, where the hills begin
Is catkin country. Up this old cart-road
Shaking our city springs, tumbling the windscreen
High and low, as if the car were a wounded

Bird trying to keep aloft of the flood—
The wiry, March-stiff catkin waits
Like fate for the open pen-knife—
The blade's squeak, the snap, and a branch of moth-soft buds.

We promised to bring her catkins,
Nothing else. But the cold that entered with us
Felt white, bloodless, in the hospital room. The furry buds
Would not stir. Our heat lay at their lost roots, and with hers.

Lawrence would have been proud to have written this poem; and in the adventurous verse movement through which the plot develops in a wholly natural way we might think of Edward Thomas. But the really satisfactory and praiseworthy thing about Wevill's second collection is that his poems are, can it be believed? about Life, not Literature.

By contrast, Donald Justice's second volume is almost wholly about literature, often not very exciting literature. "How fashionably sad my early poems are" begins one, supposedly later, poem. But the epithet would do just as well for the present collection. Even "To the Hawks," dedicated to McNamara, Rusk and Bundy, ends up sounding sad and beautiful: "The young schoolteacher,/ Waving one arm in / Time to the music,/ Is waving farewell./ Her mouth is open/ To sound the alarm./ The mouth of the world/ Grows round with the sound." Or there is the wondering regret, or archly-wondering regret, or mock-arch-regret (what is it anyway?) on which so many of the

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poems turn: in "Party" "the little band of initiates/ Stand about in their circle/ Attempting the ancient modes/ Lord Bacchus himself must have invented./ In so far they have failed/ To summon up any but the/ Familiar demons of a banal whimsy. . . ." What I want to know is, was Donald Justice there? Did he help out? Or was he busy writing a poem? The best line in the book is an epigraph from John D. MacDonald, "One of those men who can be a car salesman or a tourist from Syracuse or a hired assassin." Mr. Justice takes the good edge off the remark and weaves it into a fashionably sad poem: "My name is all names and none./ I am the used-car salesman,/ The tourist from Syracuse,/ The hired assassin, waiting." No, that was not what MacDonald meant at all.

Denise Levertov and Robert Creeley usually provide the third and fourth names of a list that begins with Charles Olson and Robert Duncan. Surely it is time to break up the list, at least to the point of distinguishing Miss Levertov from the boys, specifically from Mr. Creeley. Her new collection should leave no doubt that she *is* different. Like David Wevill, her energies go into the making of poems, into the forming of intense yet modulated presentations of life. She spends no time whatsoever in flattering, cajoling, or winking at the reader; nor does she carry on a self-regarding dialogue with us the better to coax us into assent. Furthermore, and perhaps most riskily, she is not inclined toward jokes, ironies—harsh or suave—directed at the self. I don't think the absence of such wit makes for solemn poems, mainly because she gets so much on-going suppleness into the lines; in Williams' terms, she has Invention, and the things of her poetry are well-spaced and well-timed. In most of these poems a voice is overhead, serious—often to the point of grimness—(the poems on Vietnam are the most obvious case in point) yet musical too, on the move in various and interesting ways. Miss Levertov is preoccupied with the job of rendering, of Poundian presentation through powerful directness—the poem as well-written as good prose: "He cuts into a slab of wood,/ engrossed, violently precise./ Thus, yesterday, the day before yesterday,/ engines of fantasy were evolved/ in poster paints. Tonight/ a face forms under the knife,/ slashed with stern/ crisscrosses of longing, downstrokes/ of silence endured—" (from "The Son"). There are also many lyric resources, as demonstrated most fully in the fine "Olga Poems," written in celebration of her older sister, and handsomely evoking their childhood in Essex. Here is Olga

> setting herself
> to sift cinders after early Mass all of one winter,
>
> labelling her desk's normal disorder, basing
> her verses on Keble's *Christian Year,* picking
> those endless arguments, pressing on

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to manipulate lives to disaster . . . To change,
to change the course of the river! . . .

or seen unaffectedly against the Essex landscape:

Under autumn clouds, under white
wideness of winter skies you went walking
the year you were most alone

returning to the old roads, seeing again
the signposts pointing to Theydon Garnon
or Stapleford Abbots or Greensted,

crossing the ploughlands (whose color I named *murple,*
a shade between brown and mauve that we loved . . .)

Though it's always depressing to be told (as we are about Miss Levertov) that somebody was influenced by Buber and is good on "I-Thou" relations, Miss Levertov is good on them. But even when she's explicit about it, at the ending of the poem "Cat as Cat," a bit of tone saves the revelation from portentousness: "Likewise/ flex and reflex of claws/ gently pricking through sweater to skin/ gently sustains their own tune,/ not mine. I-Thou, cat, I-Thou." This is the best new book of poems of the quarter.

And what about Robert Creeley then? First of all, he needs an explanatory preface in which to tell us about *things:* "Things continue, but my sense is that I have, at best, simply taken place with that fact." As if that were not enough he goes on: "I am trying to say that what I think to say is of no help to me—and yet insist on my seriousness, which is a sense of my nature I would like to admire." Truer words were never spoken, and the poems are fully admiring of what Mr. Creeley would like to call, if he might, his seriousness. No doubt I have failed to tune in to the directness of Creeley's stutter—perhaps it is a *phenomenological* stutter: "But what we want/ is not what we get./ What we saw, we think/ we will see again?/ We will not, Moving we will/ move, and then/ stop." What Creeley has found out is that we move toward Death; with that in mind he begins to think: "There is nothing I am/ nothing not. A place between, I am. I am/ more than thought, less/ than thought." I found myself assenting to most anything he said, as he rolled on. Of course (and some might think this an advantage) on the page it all looks very lean and hungry—no fat poems here. And there is, along the way to Death, Sex which makes the poet feel kinda humble and kinda proud: "I remember/ once in a rented room on/ 27th street, the woman I loved . . . she/ had to pee but was nervous,/ embarrassed I suppose I/ would watch her. . . ." How strange that she should feel this way! By the end of the poem, though, with the poet watching, we're informed that she "turned on/ One faucet and

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shyly pissed." The word of course is "shyly" not "slyly," and the concluding reflection: "What love might learn from such a sight." What indeed! Here is Otherness again, this time with a gee-whiz post Lawrentian gloss. I found the self-admiration of this poem typical of the unrelieved solemnity, not seriousness, running through *Words* (catchy title). The result adds up to, in the concluding words of one poem, "a little/ faint thing/ hardly felt, a/ kind of small/ nothing."

In conclusion: four summary volumes of very different sorts.[3] John Hall Wheelock has learned nothing from Pound or Williams, is not out to influence younger poets, and titles his latest book, unembarrassedly, *Dear Men and Women*. Without becoming J. Donald Adams and using him as a stick to beat other contemporaries, it should be said that Mr. Wheelock, at age 80, has looked back on his life and written some wholly affecting, totally genuine songs of experience. Two stanzas from the longer poem "Question and Answer" serve to indicate the tenor of the best of these poems. The question:

> And can *this* be the room where, oh, such eons ago,
> A young man grieved and exulted, can *this* have been me?
> I need wonder no more what it's like to have died, who now
> stand here and know.
> All shall be taken.

and the answer:

> Like swallows when summer is over, like the clear light
> Of morning that fades into dusk, they vanish away,
> And our autumn is on us, a gradual darkening, the first chill
> of night.
> All shall be taken.

With fine dignity, but a wondering reluctance to admit that this should be so, the poet sings of how the Eden we dream of in our youths is equally the dream of old age, except that it now lies behind us, in the past:

> And there they dwell, those ineffable presences,
> Safe beyond time, rescued from death and change.
> Though all shall be taken, they only shall not be taken—
> Immortal, unaging, unaltered, faithful yet
> To that lost dream world they inhabit.
> ("Dear Men and Women")

[3] DEAR MEN AND WOMEN, by *John Hall Wheelock*, Scribner's. $3.50. BUCKSHEE, by *Ford Madox Ford*, Pym-Randall Press. $2.00. THE COLLECTED SHORTER POEMS OF KENNETH REXROTH. New Directions. $7.50. THE COLLECTED POEMS OF LOUIS MACNEICE. Oxford. $9.75.

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This is all these poems have to say, and unexpectedly, it is enough.

"Buckshee" is a British Army word signifying "something unexpected, unearned—gratifying." Appropriately, the Pym-Randall press of Cambridge has made available to us these last poems of Ford Madox Ford's, with introductory essays by Robert Lowell and Kenneth Rexroth. As Lowell says, Ford "coughs and blunders a bit" in the earlier poems of the volume, but eventually settles into a garrulous and charming groove—especially if you like the Tietjens groove: "For you cannot measure time or thought by the clock./ It can't be done. You can measure meals or cloth,/ Or railway journeys, cornfields or the sea/ By dials . . . and yet not Eternity/ That's Time grown incorruptible . . ."; or ". . . Imagine honeycomb/ Boxed as you see it on your market stalls,/ A hundred boxes, row on row over row/ In a parallelogram? . . . Time boxes up/ His honey like an apiculturist./ It must be honey, not the *ersatz,* bee-bread/ That sullen bees chew out on wasted days. . . ." And so on. Nobody else sounds like Ford, and the way he runs his poems on the engagements of pure personality makes *Buckshee* contemporary (one thinks of Randall Jarrell's *The Lost World*) as well as attractively period.

The lively and intelligent introduction to Ford's poems by Kenneth Rexroth makes me wish I could feel that his own collected shorter poems measure up to his obvious attractiveness as a friend and encourager to other poets. He is at his best when he salutes a hero, as in the letter to William Carlos Williams when he brushes away Williams' talk of dying: "The day will come/ When a young woman will walk/ By the lucid Williams River,/ Where it flows through an idyllic/ News from Nowhere sort of landscape,/ And she will say to her children,/ 'Isn't it beautiful?' " She goes on to tell them that it used to be called the Passaic, but was renamed for the man who sung of it as the vilest swillhole in Christendom. Rexroth's tone becomes correspondingly generous and admiringly inventive. But too often the case is that the "I" of the poems—Rexroth himself—is alone, walking over some Western mountain, looking up at the sky, calling on memories; and at these points we often get something like this: "The years have gone. It is spring/ Again. Mars and Saturn will/ Soon come on, low in the West,/ In the dusk . . ." where the line breaks feel arbitary, the mood too flatly unvaried. His powerful sensitivity to the natural word, particularly to flowers, and his admiration for imagist principles are real enough. But I don't hear a compelling musical spirit in the poems, or feel a personal presence that grows more interesting as we become more acquainted with it.

These last two qualities are what Louis MacNeice's *Collected Poems* have in abundance, in addition to which a marvelously acute rendering of the spirits of so many places: Belfast and Birmingham, London and Barcelona, Calcutta and Portsmouth, N. H. There is so much to discover here; I only single out the early "Autumn Journal" (1938) in which the poet—Orwell's Decent Man—carries us with him

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through the private and public events of that time, and manages to hold our ears and mind by a combination of ironic intelligence and the lyrically off-balanced forward movement of the verse:

> None of our hearts are pure, we always have mixed motives,
> Are self-deceivers, but the worst of all
> Deceits is to murmur 'Lord, I am not worthy'
> And, lying easy, turn your face to the wall.
> But may I cure that habit, look up and outwards
> And may my feet follow my wider glance
> First no doubt to stumble, then to walk with the others,
> And in the end—with luck and time—to dance.

MacNeice had the luck and the persistence, if not quite all the time he should have had. Without arguing the case, let me assert that this volume is the evidence that his work is comparable in seriousness and in wit to his contemporaries—Auden, Edwin Muir and Graves (*not* Spender and Day Lewis as has too often been said). And there are moments in the poems when the personality revealed seems incomparable, like to nothing but itself. Here is its end, for purposes of this chronicle, in the late poem "Selva Obscura":

> A house can be haunted by those who were never there
> If there was where they were missed. Returning to such
> Is it worse if you miss the same another or none?
> The haunting anyway is too much.
> You have to leave the house to clear the air.
>
> A life can be haunted by what it never was
> If that were merely glimpsed. Lost in the maze
> That means yourself and never out of the wood
> These days, though lost, will be all your days
> Life, if you leave it, must be left for good.
>
> And yet for good can be also where I am,
> Stumbling among dark treetrunks, should I meet
> One sudden shaft of light from the hidden sky
> Or, finding bluebells bathe my feet,
> Know that the world, though more, is also I.
>
> Perhaps suddenly too I strike a clearing and see
> Some unknown house—or was it mine?—but now
> It welcomes whom I miss in welcoming me;
> The door swings open and a hand
> Beckons to all the life my days allow.

The life that beckons from MacNeice's poetry is welcome indeed.

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LAURENCE LIEBERMAN

Of Mind and World[1]

NOT THE LEAST OF A. R. AMMONS' VIRTUES is that he is an original philosopher in his poetry, though often he parades in the guise of poet-as-anti-philosopher, much as Plato wore the guise of philosopher-as-anti-poet. In "Uh, Philosophy," he cuts deeper into the subject the more he pretends, with graceful offhandedness, to dismiss its importance:

> I understand
> reading the modern philosophers
> that truth is so much a method
> it's perfectly all
> right for me to believe whatever
> I like or if I like,
> nothing:
> I do not know that I care to be set that free:

He comes at each idea a little from the side, obliquely, with a chuckle of ridicule in the voice of the poem every time the meandering river of the speaker's mind inclines to become trapped by any one idea or perspective, or threatens to take ideas in-and-of-themselves as having supreme consequence:

> philosophy is
> a pry pole, materialization,
> useful as a snowshovel when it snows;
> something solid to knock people down with
> or back people up with:
> I do not know that I care to be backed up in just that way:
> the philosophy gives clubs to
> everyone, and I prefer disarmament:

The irony masterfully saves the poem, always reminding the reader that ideas are so many disinterestedly linked events in the circuitous drama of the poem's argument, which ends exactly where it began:

> what are facts if I can't line them up
> anyway I please
> and have the freedom
> I refused I think in the beginning?

The poem's secret, which is revealed subtly and implicitly in its movement, is that the mind finds truth, is truest to itself, when it is released into the self-discovering rhythms of a good poem. To be true to the voice and line of the poem, an ever-changing field of play, always

[1] NORTHFIELD POEMS, by *A. R. Ammons*. Cornell University Press. $3.95.

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captures the speaker's first allegiance, never the ideas themselves. Most ideas would remain inert if not for the vivid life the poem's artistry imparts to them.

Ammons' knack for self-mockery saves the studiedly philosophical poems from self-conscious straining, as in "Zone," in which matter-of-fact remarks about the time of day, and such, interrupt the flow of formal scientific discourse. Ideas, in the poems, are quantities of form, shape, design; they are not vehicles for conveying logic, truth, validity. Ideas have texture, color, size, weight. To Ammons, they have the quality of physical objects:

> A symmetry of thought
> is a metal object:
> is to spirit
> a rock of individual shape. . .
> a crystal, percipitate

Ammons treats ideas as so many jointed bodies colliding with each other, and with observed natural phenomena, interchangeably. Conversely, actual objects may be decomposed into substanceless vapors by the intense play of the mind. The interchange of form between ideas that have grown solid and objects that have turned gaseous, or bodiless, may have been suggested to Ammons by Einstein's formula $E = MC^2$, demonstrating the relation between energy and matter. (Ammons, indeed, has been schooled in the sciences, and this background broadened the scope of his poetic imagination from the start.) Whatever the source of his idea/thing inversion, one may more profitably inquire into the use he makes of it, the way he fits it to his unique sensibility. I see it as a particularly apt formula for embodying Ammons' original view of the relation between mind and world, between inner and outer reality. Though ideas and things may exist separately, they can have no importance or vitality, for Ammons, unless they disturb each other, interact. When this interaction is carried to the point of total engagement, the poet achieves his vision, a state in which elements of thought and elements of nature mix freely, and exchange identities, in a kind of ecstatic flux of poetic imagination, as in "Peak" (I quote the poem entire):

> Everything begins at the tip-end, the dying-out,
> of mind:
> the dazed eyes set and light
> dissolves actual trees:
> the world beyond: tongueless,
> unexampled
> burns dimension out of shape,
> opacity out of stone:
> come: though the world ends and cannot

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end,
the apple falls sharp
to the heart starved with time.

The peak experience is defined and demonstrated. Mind stretched to its utmost limits (the "tip-end" of consciousness), after acute concentration on particulars of concrete experience ("actual trees"), casts into "the world beyond." Paradoxically, a scrupulous attention to the thing itself, its precise identity, begets a mental state in which the most solid things lose their form, become dimensionless, apparitional ghosts in the poet's vision (trees dissolve, stone loses its opacity). Ammons' genius is most evident in the transition into the final stanza: "come, though the world ends and cannot/ end." Invitation to the reader to take the final step, to throw himself fully into the world of the poem without holding anything back, is a frequent device; in this poem, it is perfectly timed and has the disarming simplicity of a handshake. The reader was at the point of recoiling from the experience, since the poem had shown that mind's peak is a sort of mindlessness in which the lovely things of this world fade away into shadows of themselves, but Ammons now assures us that we shall return from the "peak" (as Frost swings back on his birches) to find a world of things more solid for having undergone his visionary dissolution: "the apple falls sharp." One must be willing to sacrifice the world completely, in faith (as Kierkegaard's Knight of Faith offers up his son Isaac), if one is to get it back made whole, regain it to the peak of mind's embrace.

Ammons, the craftsman, often declares that he will risk everything, technically, to avoid the temptation to take refuge in the safety of pregiven forms; and, from time to time, he discards methods, devices of his own, that have proven successful, as in "Muse":

. . . how many
times must I be broken and reassembled!
anguish of becoming,
pain of moulting,
descent! before the unending moment of vision:

In learning to write all over again, he stumbles, gropingly, the lines of the poem "inching rootlike into the dark." Since he must slog through many failed poems "to find materials/ for the new house of my sight," he takes his place beside D. H. Lawrence and Whitman in the Anglo-American free verse tradition of blessedly "uneven" poets. Probably, that sort of unevenness will always be the sacred trademark of the most gifted and revolutionary poets, since most of our good writers seem satisfied, if not compusively driven, to maintain a constant of external polish in everything they write.

Ammons is pursuing a theory of poetry that radically departs from the theory advanced by the poetry of Yeats and the criticism of Ezra

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Pound. Ezra occurs as an advocate to be resisted or revolted against in a number of poems in this book and in the previous collection:

I coughed
    and the wind said
Ezra will live
to see your last
    sun come up again . . .
the wind went off
    carving
monuments through a field of stone
    monuments whose shape
wind cannot arrest but
taking hold on
changes

(from "The Wind Coming Down From")

If Ezra is a monument of stone, Ammons chooses to identify with the lowly weed. If Ezra advocates the poem of permanence, the indestructible art-object, Ammons prefers the poem as a way of being, of being in touch. While Ezra affirms what is most tough and enduring in man, the ruthless will to immortality of the conventional major poet, Ammons reveres a delicate, sensitive transitoriness of being. The best of Ammons' poems point, finally, away from themselves, back to the most evanescent motions and vicissitudes of wind, leaf, stream, which first enchanted the poet and finally stole his heart away. The gentlest motions of things touch him most deeply, speak to him with a sort of ultimate, if non-human, intimacy. He is vulnerable, nakedly exposed, receptive to the touch of feather, pebble, birdsong—in fact, these phenomena have such command over him as to leave him looking helplessly struck (or struck dumb), as by indecent or obscenely overpowering forces:

I turned (as I will) to weeds and . . .
weedroots of my low-feeding shiver

So far is Ammons from forcing or contriving his vision, his awakening, in the best poems—in "The Constant" he struggles to resist, even to suppress, the *onset* of revelation, with the air of a man who has been used overmuch, exploited, by his admittedly favorite mistress:

When leaving the primrose, bayberry dunes, seaward
I discovered the universe this morning,
        I was in no
mood
for wonder,
    the naked mass of so much miracle
already beyond the vision
of my grasp:

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If formerly the mistress of experience (of miracle) consented to be a passive, supine guest to his advances, in "The Constant," she has become the aggressor: the poet, helpless and reluctant, allows himself to be overpowered by her mastery.

In a number of poems, Ammons unleashes surprising resources of power in himself by a sort of feminine submission to experience. In "Kind," "Height," and "The Wind Coming Down From" there is a fierce insistence on lowliness and passivity ("preference sends me stooping/ seeking/ the least"). This is his answer, his refusal, to the male challenge addressed to him by the massive antagonist in each poem—the giant redwood, the mountain, the wind; in each case, he recoils. Like St. Francis (and unlike Ezra!), he savors the strength of weakness. Strangely, all three poems seem facile, the dialectic merely clever and fanciful, perhaps archly whimsical. The poems are all statement, all philosophy, despite the illusion they try to advance of drama and dialectic. I don't believe the wind or redwood as antagonists because their *being* in the poems lacks the solidity of a felt presence. They exist only as foils to the persona, and the poems never extend beyond direct emission of "message." They desperately need extension into the world of substance and event.

The weakest poems in the book suffer from over-writing. "Sphere," like "Discoverer," is all writing: the subject—a voyage through the dark waters of the womb—recedes, as the dense filigree of language drives it underground. The subject is so self-limiting, the language so overtaxed, a reader has no sense of traveling any distance across its sinuous contour. Only the agility of Ammons' rhythms can induce a reader to proceed from one end of the poem to the other. A succession of weighty phrases, strung like clothes on a line, smothers the poem's life-breath: ". . . amniotic infinity . . . boundless in circularity . . . consistency of motion arising—annihilated . . . infinite multiplicity, in the deepening, filtering earthen womb. . . ."

"The Constant" succeeds precisely where the other poems fail because the poet's experience of the world, even though felt to be a "drab constant," is so intense it forcibly invades the poet's mind and takes possession of the landscape of the poem. Though the opening and closing lines (quoted above) are clung to by the speaker's intellection, those lines are the feeble defeated cries of a lover ravished by his mistress, who inhabits the dominant central section of the poem's battlefield. The war between mind and world, though a losing battle for mind, yields fantastic life to the poem. The mind's defeat is the poem's victory. And yet, the speaker's dissatisfaction of mind, resentment even, at the end of the poem, is a valid redirection in itself. In "Corson's Inlet" and "World," poems of the previous volume, Ammons had already fully mastered the plateau of experience successfully revisited in "The Constant": the apocalyptic stroll along the dunes, the Blakean discovery of an entire universe in a clamshell-enclosed "Lake," the sense of totality and selfcontainment balanced by

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the sense of fragility and temporariness, likening the clamshell universe to the poem:

> . . . a gull's toe could spill the universe:
> two more hours of sun could dry it up:
> a higher wind could rock it out:
>
> the tide will rise, engulf it, wash it loose:
> utterly:

Perhaps the only distinctly new element in "The Constant" is the recognition that the poet has been here before and is anxious to break out of the enclosure of old experience, to escape into a fresh territory. I suspect there is a hushed cry of frustration at the heart of *Northfield Poems*. The author senses that most of the good work in the book is a repetition of past success.

Some of the very short poems indicate a remarkable new direction in Ammons' work. At first reading, there is no clue to a significance beyond the purely pictorial and imagistic. Suddenly, one word or line will touch off an astonishing number of overtones. In "Trap," one is at first merely enticed by the visual clarity of the mating butterflies:

> . . . they
> spin, two orbits
> of an
>
> invisible center:
> rise
> over the roof
>
> and caught on
> currents
> rise higher
>
> than trees and
> higher and up
> out of sight,
>
> swifter in
> ascent than they
> can fly or fall.

The poem's surprising force comes from the last lines. The spareness, cleanness, sharpness—the absence of ambiguity or overtones—all contribute to the astonishing impact of the finish, which transforms the entire poem, at a single stroke, into symbol. The reader is left stunned: where did all the hidden propulsion spring from? The restraint with which most of the poem is rendered allows the body of the piece to serve as a perfect conductor of the charge that travels between the two poles—title and last lines—as swiftly as lightning takes the tree.

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The most impressive poem in the volume is a long one which achieves a new scope emerging unexpectedly in the familiar setting of the best former poems:the shore. In "One: Many," after the slightly stilted and heavy-handed philosophy of the opening lines, Ammons resumes his favorite technique of cataloguing brilliant ephemera along the creek-bank: "When I tried to summarize/ a moment's events along the creek. . . ." Following a delicious summary, the sentence concludes: "I was released into a power beyond my easy failures." At this point, the mind leaps into a new dimension of world, as the catalogue extends suddenly from the familiar imagery of shore to the free-ranging geography of the American continent. Ammons finds himself, for the first time, in the company of Whitman's wayfaring and wandering, or that of Roethke's last North American meditations. But the imagery is uniquely Ammons' own; it has been revived and re-tuned to his most sinuous lines and rhythms:

I think of California's towns and ranges,
    deserts and oil fields;
and of Maine's
    unpainted seahouses
    way out on the tips of fingerlands,
lobster traps and pots,
freshwater lakes; of Chicago,
    hung like an eggsac on the leaf of lake
Michigan, with
its
Art Museum, Prudential Building, Knickerbocker Hotel
(where Cummings stayed);
of North Carolina's
    sounds, banks, and shoals,
    telephone wire loads of swallows,
of Columbus County
        where fresh-dug peanuts
        are boiled
            in iron pots, salt filtering
in through the boiled-clean shells (a delicacy
true
as artichokes or Jersey
asparagus): and on through villages,
along dirt roads, ditchbanks, by gravel pits and on
    to the homes,
inventions, longings:

He started in his own back yard, and fumbled into the impossibly new ground, into "unattainable reality itself." At his best, Ammons is willing to stake everything on the full health of the single imagination, cut loose from history and the genius that labored the language into monuments, to begin poetic art afresh.

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WILLIAM DICKEY

The Language of Objects

"No one tries to be more lucid than I do," Wallace Stevens writes, in one of the last letters included in this collection.[1] "If I do not always succeed, it is not a question of my English, nor of yours, but I should say of something not communicated because not shared." The question of the nature of Stevens' communication, of the kind and the extent of the sharing that does in fact take place with other people, is to me the most interesting one this correspondence raises, interesting both as part of the nature of an interesting man, and as it affects the nature of his poems.

The correspondence suggests, over and over again, the ease with which Stevens approaches the objects of physical nature, and the difficulty with which he approaches people. The profound and deeply convincing passages from his early journal are those which describe physical nature and Stevens' relation to it. It is a relation of great sensitivity and discrimination:

> In the sunset to-night I tried to get the value of the various colors. The sun was dimmed by a slight mistiness which was sensitive to the faintest colors and thus gave an unusual opportunity for observation. In this delicate net was caught up first of all a pure whiteness which gradually tinted to yellow, and then to heavy orange and thick, blazing gold; this grew light again and slowly turned to pink. The feathery deer-grass before me twinkled silverly in a little breeze, the ordinary blades of green-grass and wheat stubble glittered at their tips while the ragweed and clover were more dark and secret. The middle-distance remained stolid and indifferent.

[1] LETTERS OF WALLACE STEVENS, selected and edited by *Holly Stevens*. Alfred A. Knopf. $17.50. This edition contains almost 1000 letters, representing about one-third of those available to the editor; others may of course still be extant. The editor abbreviates some letters, and she uses material from Stevens' journal, and from letters of his father to Stevens, to fill gaps in the correspondence. Her intention has been to present selections that will be of interest to readers of poetry, or that are stylistically notable, or that offer biographical information not elsewhere available. She has avoided duplicating information, and she has excluded business details from otherwise personal letters. The book is, as a result, more valuable to the general reader than to the scholar: the latter, who may be concerned with just such questions as the extent to which a given statement is duplicated (as a possible indication of the importance Stevens gives to it), or with the proximity of personal and business discussions (as a clue to the relation Stevens sees between these different aspects of his life), will not be entirely able to tell whether he is discussing Stevens or the editor's sense of what kind of a man Stevens most essentially was. The text of the letters appears to be carefully presented. The annotation is minimal, and leaves unexplained many questions to which a personal knowledge of Stevens' life might have provided answers: Why, for one very minor but to me nagging instance, at one point in his correspondence with his wife, does Stevens stop signing himself "Bud" and begin addressing *her* as "Bud"?

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By contrast, Stevens' language when he writes a letter of condolence to the wife of the man with whom he had most freely discussed his poetry, is stiff and difficult:

> We were much alike in many ways. In the beginning I held off. As time passed, and as we grew accustomed to exchange letters, I felt much freer and had it been possible for us to see one another more often we should soon have had something much heartier in common.

Stevens himself feels the difficulty: "In any case, I am not a good talker and don't particularly enjoy exchanging ideas with people in talk. At home, our house was rather a curious place, with all of us in different parts of it, reading." Or: "I love that: il faut se nourrir d'amitié. Personally, I nourish myself on books, nature, this and that, music—so rarely on the good friendships of men and women." Stevens is never plain stupid about flowers or animals; he can be about people: "The Italians have as much right to take Ethiopia from the coons as the coons had to take it from the boa-constrictors."

At the same time that Stevens shows this hesitation with respect to people, and this easy identification with the objects of physical nature (to which, as in the passage given above, human potentialities of emotion are often transferred) he also shows, from the earliest letters present here, an exuberant facility with extremely varied language: "Forever with supernal affection, thy rosy-lipped arch-angelic jeune" is the close of a letter he wrote his mother when he was sixteen. It suggests, as many other passages suggest, that Stevens' sense of himself is not going to be defined in terms of simple or ordinary speech with other people (as, for example, so much of Williams' is). It is the native exuberance of language, plus the evasion of the limitations of ordinary speech (limitations both of vocabulary and of syntax, with its assumptions of logical, agreed-on patterns) that seem to allow room for the development of Stevens' poetic style. His energy must say something, but ordinary language is a tentative or imperfect vehicle for it; it will then provide its own language, which may be as much a language of objects as of men.

Yet the poems, if they are not to be simply solipsistic, must make some sense in the world of men. That obligation is one Stevens persistently confronts. The poems themselves *must* be enough: "It is shocking to have to say this sort of thing. Please destroy these notes. I don't mind your saying what I have said here. But I don't want you to quote me. No more explanations." But of course more explanations follow: for a sympathetic critic or translator, Stevens will make elaborately detailed efforts to explain what he is doing. This concern shows also in his growing interest in the theory of poetry, an interest which moves into the poems and provides them with subject matter, so that they must at once be and explain in the order of their being.

The strength of this desire to be understood might have diminished

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the individuality of Stevens' language, have turned it more toward the vocabulary and syntax patterns of usual American prose. That this does not in fact happen may be due to the presence in Stevens' life of a strong and counter-balancing force: "the office." The importance of Stevens' business position to him is extraordinarily great; it is enough to keep him from leaving Hartford for more than a day or two at a time, enough to keep him (well after a compulsory retirement age) from accepting the Charles Eliot Norton Professorship at Harvard, lest he might in doing so actually have to retire. The usefulness of the office to him, while it is constantly apparent, is directly described in these letters only once:

> How fortunate I am, in such weather, to have the office, where one lives in a sort of vacuum, containing nothing but the pastime of work. The great building is like a neutral zone, invulnerable to the weather. The leaves outdoors seen through the windows, belong to a perishable landscape, come from nowhere. My pen and my inkwell and my blotter and my memorandum pads are what count. Every now and then, a colored boy places fresh mail on my desk, like a planet passing at night and casting its light on objects, but with more meanings than any planet.

This sense of the office as a vigorous prose center, a place where things are regularly and successfully done in the patterns of common speech, may be what allows Stevens his luxury of uncommon speech, as his work at the office allows him the luxury of a Corton to accompany melancholy, or a little Meursault: "This last always seems the coldest thing in the world on a hot day in the garden where I like to have lunch occasionally if the neighbors are away as they often are."

Lunch in the garden *only* when the neighbors are away; an enjoyment in the absence of people. A great part of Stevens' experience of the world in his later years is deliberately vicarious: it is important for him to have correspondents in Ceylon, Dublin, Paris, but it is equally important that he not go there himself, ("alas, I have no expectation of ever visiting Europe") and it is not really desirable that he meet his correspondents face to face. The French pictures he delights to order are chosen on his advice, but by another's eye. When he seeks information, it is through an intermediary, rather than from the most likely source. His approach is intentionally oblique.

The obliqueness is so intense as to be very noticeable, and at first disturbing, until one recognizes what it is that is happening: the method of the poetry is now more clearly emerging through and determining Stevens' life. The prose is taken care of, all the standard patterns and combinations of conscience and responsibility are met by the body at the neutral office. Unhampered by the need to feel them, the mind can try for its own independence in a world of objects and ideas, can try for a speech of objects and ideas and see what oblique relationship that speech has to the ordinary speech of men.

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ROBERT GARIS

Varieties of the Will

I AM ABOUT TO BEGIN a chronicle of failure, and it may be my failure. In the thirty-two novels I read during the last three months I have found little to praise and I may have proved myself merely crankily hard to please. But if I have missed a lot by harping on the fact of failure, by being too judgmental, too unsympathetic, I have at the same time found it absorbing and sobering to try to understand and to respect the reasons for failure. I have a new awed sense of the power of the human will to write, and a renewed awareness of the famous fact that the will to write can thwart the free work of the imagination. So this is a chronicle of the will too.[1]

Let me begin with an extreme instance. The willful unintelligibility of Robert Pinget's *The Inquisitory* is in the French new-wave tradition—radical, theoretical, tireless and triumphant. For unidentified reasons an unidentified inquisitor pumps information out of an old deaf man; the questions center about the old man's experience as the servant of "two gentlemen" but both inquisitor and inquisitee wander afield from this center; the old man is sometimes devious, the inquisitor is seldom interested in pursuing the glimpses of significant action that catch the reader's attention; at the end no discernible structure of meaning has been achieved. This failure is the book's meaning. As far back as 1954 Robbe-Grillet praised Pinget for having perhaps quietly achieved the new-wave goal of destroying conventional novelistic structure and substance, and Beckett has called *The Inquisitory* "one of the most important novels of the last ten years." Since Beckett seems to me our most important writer, I read Pinget's novel very carefully; and I can now ascribe Beckett's praise to the identity he shares with Robbe-Grillet—that of a French literary personage—rather than to the part of his identity that produces his own extraordinarily moving novels about meaninglessness. Nevertheless, the most courteous way to understand *The Inquisitory* is as Pinget's attempt to reach Beckett's theoretical goal by a different path. Beckett tries to empty his fiction of the false substantiality of things, events and people in order to express "how it is," the essential experience of living; Pinget crams his novel with the deliberately false substantiality of denotation without connotation—proper

[1] THE INQUISITORY, by *Robert Pinget*. Trans. by Donald Watson. Grove. $6.50. THE THIRD BOOK ABOUT ACHIM, by *Uwe Johnson*. Harcourt, Brace & World. $5.75. THE MAN WHO KNEW KENNEDY, by *Vance Bourjaily*. Dial. $5.95. WHEN SHE WAS GOOD, by *Philip Roth*. Random House. $5.95. FATHERS, by *Herbert Gold*. Random House. $5.95. A MEETING BY THE RIVER, by *Christopher Isherwood*. Simon and Schuster. $4.50. THE SOLDIER'S ART, by *Anthony Powell*. Little-Brown. $4.95.

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names of people, towns, streets; descriptions of furniture; unconnected and undeveloped fragments of events and relations. With none of these are we allowed, much less enabled, to make meaningful contact: life, then, is information without order. To this familiar message Pinget has added only one special accent, unless his translator misrepresents him. Since we never tune into any characteristic rhythm in the old man's unpunctuated answers, the novel is physically hard to read to a degree beyond anything I have met before. This triumph of new-wave will—the pure alienation of the reader, purged of all personal emotion—will of course be wasted on most readers, who will have stopped reading long before unreadibility has made its full impact. I had to keep on, and I now know what it's like to live in the Siberian rigors of the French literary scene. Reading *The Inquisitory* is a stupefying physical chore and Pinget wants it to be. *The Unnameable* may have the same theoretical intention, but Beckett's imagination—not to menton his humanity, his pain, his verbal genius—won't let him have his will: reading his novel is exhilarating in the way all great art is exhilarating.

But Pinget's novel is at least an independent *force de frappe;* Uwe Johnson's *The Third Book about Achim* is embarrassingly dependent on American aid. The dominant influence in this novel is Faulkner's, if influence is not too dignified a word for this enthusiastic German adoption of an American labor-saving device. Johnson's narrator is a West-German journalist on a visit to his former mistress, who has become an important movie-star in East Germany; he accepts an official invitation to write a book about his ex-mistress' current lover Achim, a racing-bicycle champion, East-German state-hero and elected people's representative who has already been the subject of two other books. The journalist cannot in the end write the book: he and Mr. Johnson both fail in their attempt to discover the secret essence of the East-German way of life. On the way to failure, however, we get an extremely familiar representation of the asperities and hypocrisies of life in a totalitatian state. Despite its familiarity this representation is not unbelievable, and therefore the question how this way of life can be supported by honest people is clearly posed. But Mr. Johnson doesn't think through the question by imaginative examination of the answers that present themselves easily to the reader, nor of the special kinds of answers that his own experience as an exile from East Germany might be supposed to have given him. Instead the Faulkner Meaning Inflator is applied, to thrill us about the mysterious difficulty of the quest and the ineffable elusiveness of the answer. Mr. Johnson seems to have in fact nothing to say about East Germany, and he hasn't even tried to say anything about, or with, the inert relation between the journalist, the movie-star and the athlete. Like his journalist-hero, he has no book to write. It is hard to acquit this novel of the charge of opportunism.

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Vance Bourjaily's title, *The Man Who Knew Kennedy,* sounds opportunistic, and his novel may have failed to win readers for that reason. This instance of the manipulated public's striking back has its sad irony, for I am perfectly convinced that this novel comes out of a disinterested need to account for the impact and to discover the meaning of Kennedy's death. The question is explicitly posed by one of the characters on the day of the assassination: "What kind of people are we?" Mr. Bourjaily's "answer" is the story of the destruction of a smaller man, but a man of some real power, Dave Doremus, who had occasionally run across Kennedy. This upside-down version of the strategy of *The Republic*—look at the small letters and then check to see whether the big letters aren't the same—seems promising. And Mr. Bourjaily undoubtedly meant us to do most of the checking by ourselves, while and after reading. But he has confusingly done some himself—confusingly because his taste forced him to speak of Kennedy's death in almost entirely external terms, so that the question comes to be "What kind of people could allow or cause this death?" instead of the larger question "What did Kennedy's death mean about *him* and his relation with his and our way of life?" On the other hand, anxiety to give the smaller Kennedy stature leads Mr. Bourjaily to overweight the other side of the structure by making Doremus' destruction almost entirely self-destruction. This miscalculation actually impedes the hoped-for connection between the public world and the private world, and the result is that the novel does after all seem not entirely unlike an attempt to cash in on the Kennedy name. Furthermore, and worse, Mr. Bourjaily's scheme required him to cast about for a suitably representative private American tragedy, and I think it was this necessity that blinded him to the extraordinary trashiness of the story he finally concocted. I can find no other explanation for the sudden deterioration in the work of an interesting writer whose earlier novels, though notably middle-of-the-road in technique, insight and emotion, have always seemed genuine.

Dave Doremus has brains, looks, the capacity for hard work, and we are told explicitly that he has glamor; there are the ambitions to match. His financial, moral and physical self-destruction is initiated by the bitchy upper-class wife who represents his drive for power; it is violently consummated by his obsessed pity for a cheap doped-up nightclub singer who represents his yearning to express responsible love and also perhaps his unacknowledged yearning to cop out; this obsession makes it impossible for him to be saved by the love of his new wife, one of those familiar physically clumsy "real women" who are unconscious of their powerful sexual appeal. Now these stereotypes do of course owe something to Fitzgerald and O'Hara and other more or less serious writers, but what astonishes the reader is to discover that Mr. Bourjaily's story is virtually identical with the story endlessly repeated in the current high-class junk-fiction of writers like

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John D. MacDonald. I cannot believe that Mr. Bourjaily really wanted to play in this league, in which his taste and seriousness are obvious liabilities. MacDonald sermonizes appallingly, continually and confidently about American materialism; Mr. Bourjaily tastefully refrains but seems to be giving us the same sermon subliminally. MacDonald's lurid images show the unquestioning faith with which he inhabits his fantasy world and the sheer practice he has had in representing it; Bourjaily's soft-pedalling, since it doesn't amount to serious criticism of the images, seems timid, inept, and may seem even dishonest. And so on. But I prefer to forget the quiet banality of *The Man Who Knew Kennedy*—a somewhat unusual artistic effect —as an accident, just another confusion in the aftermath of the assassination.

The deadness at the center of *When She Was Good* is no accident. It is the deliberate result of Philip Roth's cold persecution of his characters. And a certain ugly power gets generated when a highly gifted writer so relentlessly denies sympathy to his own creations. Mr. Roth's ugly subject couldn't be simpler. Because Lucy, the horrid-good girl of the title, loathes her "weak" parents, she makes up a viciously self-righteous code of principled strength against which she tests, and fails, everybody around her. Her chief victim is the boy-next-door in the Illinois town where the story is set; most of the action consists of Lucy's forcing him to marry her and then making him aware of his weakness. When he finally rebels she breaks down and apparently commits suicide; at any rate she freezes to death in a lovers' lane. After a dilly-dallying beginning, Mr. Roth's execution of this subject is straightforward, fast and appallingly flat. At first I took the two-dimensionality as Pop Art, but soon the malice behind the comic-strip simplifications became too audible to ignore. The caricatures are recognizable but Mr. Roth's feeling about them seems privately motivated, to the point where he can do nothing but say it all over and over again. Nothing in what Lucy does, nothing in the people she tortures, deepens our understanding of her or increases our sense of her importance. Rather the opposite—we are moved to protect her. And it seems also to be chiefly Mr. Roth who is victimizing her husband.

With this character, however, it becomes possible to place the quality of Mr. Roth's motive and emotion more accurately. I recognize Roy Bassart—or rather, I recognize my feelings about the type. Roy Bassart brings to mind words I haven't used much since high school, words like "jerk" and "schnook." I didn't stop using them just because slang changed; for if these words speak accurately, as I believe they do, about a special adolescent callowness, they also speak *for* a special adolescent intolerance of "wrong" people. Adolescence is the key-note, and one wonders why Mr. Roth wants to strike it. Roy's language has the Salinger super-audible high-fidelity, though

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not much of Salinger's saving inventiveness: " 'Well, I work all day long, it so happens, you know. I come home at night bushed, frankly. And half the time on weekends he's got me going out to some wedding somewhere out in the sticks—oh, forget it. You can't understand anything about my career. Or my ambitions! I have a kid growing up, Lucy. And I happen to have ambitions that I haven't given up, you know, just because I'm married.' " Lucy's language is in a different key, but it is all in one key and in fact mostly on one note: "She could hear him, hear them all, promising this, promising that, begging forgiveness, and then going right on being just what they always had been. Because they simply will not reform! They simply will not change! All they will do is get worse and worse! Why were they against a mother and a child? Why were they against a family, and home, and love? Why were they against a beautiful life, and for an ugly one? Why did they fight her and mistreat her and deny her, when all she wanted was what was right?" Mr. Roth seems to be arguing that the battle between these two languages is so central to our way of life that it is worth any amount of angry insistence. Even if I agreed about the importance of Lucy and Roy, I would find Mr. Roth's insistence the opposite of imagination.

Herbert Gold's open feeling and generous sympathy in *Fathers* are initially appealing, especially after Roth's fury; and I admired the self-criticism apparent in Mr. Gold's new quieter style: the strenuous lyricism, the boastful emotionality of the earlier work have been subdued. But to my taste they have not been transmuted into the genuinely imaginative love and insight that *Fathers* needs. I wish I could feel more enthusiastic about a novel so humane in intention and so courageously direct in its approach to large simple feelings. But sympathy and piety can be willful too; quiet acceptance can be only an assertion, though it may be the right assertion. Mr. Gold wants to honor his father in honest terms, to bridge by faith the "abyss" of incommunicability between paternal and filial love, to express filial love by imagining what can never be experienced—the sufficiency of paternal love. And he fashions a highly attractive image of his father's energy and freedom, above all of his father's charm. But in so doing he makes himself too small—or so it seems to me, and Mr. Gold's frank autobiographical novel seems to ask for a similarly frank response from his reader. The father is a man of fact and commercial action, of will and property, the son's values are opposed, and this opposition is meant to be important. But Mr. Gold underplays his own values to protect his father. This seems to me false piety to begin with, and it badly upsets the balance of the book: it makes the son's imagination of his father's virtues too fluent. There is far too much charm and far too little boredom, annoyance, pain, anger or shame, and therefore what we actually see of the father's nature and his relationship with the son doesn't begin to

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justify large language about the abyss of incommunicability. Nor do I feel much pressure behind that language in itself:

> My father did better than to lecture me in general. He took charge at a moment when I needed him to take charge. He did not understand power or love, but they were his familiars. Lacking the language for them, he dwelled in these commodities as if they were houses. Cut off from his own family at age thirteen, he lived in the world of do and make. How could he talk to sons? Nothing to say but: "Go out. I give you the stars." And of course no words even for that. "I give you the sky, the earth, the stars, and your freedom. It's all out there." No words.
>
> And how to show that he was generous? With money and energy. He swam in the motel pool with my daughters on his back. He seemed like one of those ageless Galápagos tortoises, living rocks which burgeon out of the sea, encrusted with the centuries, stubbornly enduring and waddling about their beachy turf.

This is a late moment in the novel, when the father is trying to save his son's marriage, and what the writer has in mind, obviously enough, is a statement of achieved recognition and clear declaration, a lyrical directness of insight. But shouldn't the language seem to have cost him more, and to make a more exact sense? The word "familiars" sounds more meaningful than it is, and I have trouble connecting its meaning with the sentence that follows. But the more important question is about the painful element in the father's behavior that the passage claims to have understood and accepted. What is that element, what needed such imaginative understanding as to justify this *vox-humana* tone when understanding has been achieved? It cannot surely have been just the father's lack of sophisticated self-awareness about love or the language of love; it must, just as surely, have been that the father's behavior diminished the son, denied him dignity as a person and a man? Why isn't this mentioned? The second sentence protests too much and too easily; the lyrical amplification of the father's unspoken generosity is decisively sentimental; the grandiloquent metaphor of the Galápagos tortoise is self-conscious fine writing. I think Mr. Gold has sold himself short, and the sad thing is that he has also encouraged our disbelief in the father he hoped to honor.

Part of the uneasy atmosphere of *The Berlin Stories* was due to something that wasn't there—the private concerns of the almost invisible narrator. While Sally Bowles, Mr. Norris and the rest asserted themselves vigorously, the tolerant narrator seemed to think we wouldn't be interested in what he was doing. But readers are always interested and the narrator's secrecy hinted, not unpleasantly, at his disbelief in the importance of what he was doing—the failure of his will. Isherwood brought this theme out into the open in *Prater Violet,*

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where the movie-director's assured emotional expansiveness stands in openly humiliating contrast to the narrator's dealings with abstract and interchangeable anonymities. The effect was painful, with more of the pain of confession than of controlled art; but Isherwood's tact saw him through pretty well—it is his best work. In the next few novels one respected his deliberate attempt to find importance in the personal life of the narrator, but the results were bad. Despite the apparent sincerity, frequent and obvious lapses of tone betrayed a deeper uncontrollable insincerity, a mind divided. Now, in *A Meeting by the River,* Isherwood for the first time has made a fictional image of that principled religious abdication from the personal life that we have for some time known him to be concerned with. And the comic structure of the novel seems to promise that for the first time too Isherwood is bringing the unspoken conflicts of the earlier novels into direct focus. Two estranged brothers meet in India on the occasion of the younger brother Oliver's imminent entrance into the priesthood in a Hindu monastery and his decision to try, before he leaves the "world," to make his family understand and accept his vocation. The older brother Patrick is enmeshed in the world of power and complicated personal relations. The meeting produces and reveals the brothers' comic and sad misconceptions of each other; yet Isherwood wants to enlist our friendly sympathy for both brothers and to show that a significant meeting has in fact taken place. At first enough energy and ingenuity goes into the comic double perspective to produce some diverting results and the promise of a large tolerance. But the comic energy soon fails, intricacy of irony disappears, no deeper faculty comes into play to hold the novel together and the two points of view fly apart into an irreconcilable polarity. A frank distaste for Patrick emerges as he is forced by the author to commit an act of crude bad faith that entirely alienates sympathy: when his double-life is threatened, he sells out his latest homosexual lover by writing him a letter in which he misrepresents their relationship and conceals his desperate need for the continuing maternal love of his wife. Distaste roused by this act cannot be alleviated by the crude comedy that follows, in which his Madison Avenue mentality helps him glamorize Oliver's vocation as the first step towards power and publicity as an international religious leader. Meanwhile Oliver's self-questioning has the tone of clear-eyed virginal integrity that one associates with books for boys. Isherwood's comic strategy wants us to accept Patrick's behavior as the normal messiness of personal relations and to view Oliver's naiveté with wordly irony. But the contrast is actually between pure bad faith and pure good faith, and comedy can't manage a tolerant perspective of such opposites.

Anthony Powell's comic vision is less ambitious, but it always works. Indeed, he seems to me the best comic writer going, and *The Soldier's Art* is the one work on my list in which I sensed the harmony, the

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security, the inner integrity and vitality of important art. I must point out, however, that this novel is the eighth installment in the long novel called *A Dance to the Music of Time,* and there is no use denying that the series has to be read as a whole and that the later novels in particular may make only a rather dim impression on readers who haven't done so. There are other caveats to be mentioned too. Powell has chosen his minimizing title accurately: it really is a dance that he is recording, which is to say that Powell's structure is exceptionally linear and undramatic, and that his view of life fairly consistently avoids the brilliance of major comic art. And there is another very mild and unassertive narrator to be dealt with: Powell's first-person narrative, like Isherwood's, requires an "I" whose behavior with other people won't impede the continual flow of their personalities, so we never get any inner drama of personal relations. But the mildness of Powell's narrator, Nick Jenkins, is never disquieting; his reticence about his work as a writer and his private life—about his marriage, for instance—never seems secretive or self-denigrating. Powell's success here is partly a matter of the security of his tone, as contrasted to Isherwood's insecurity, but the more important reason is that there is a clear harmony between Jenkins' mild reticence and his comic view of the will and the passions. We don't feel that Jenkins has oddly decided not to dramatize his own life, but rather that he is not a self-dramatizing person. This makes him a valuable observer. For Powell's work, though not closely organized as drama, is steadily organized in theme, and his main theme is not time, as the title might suggest, but the self-dramatizing will.

To describe Jenkins' special comic view of the self-dramatizing will I can find no more exciting word than friendliness. But friendliness can see a lot—think of Chaucer and David Copperfield and Pip. Powell isn't in a class with Chaucer or Dickens, but his comic gift is as genuine as theirs, because he can make what Jenkins sees with so mild an attitude continuously interesting, and he can make the attitude itself seem valuable without over-estimating it. Jenkins' friendliness precludes deep sympathy without seeming like a secret attack on this mode of insight. Just as his own happy marriage is solidly present in the novel though not made available to its special language, so the inner life of Widmerpool, the chief specimen of the man of will, is "there" without being explicitly rendered. Widmerpool's sense of himself is different from our sense of him; words like pleasure, pain, embarrassment and pride must be relevant to his inner feelings; it is just that we aren't enabled to know in what degree or with what nuance. Meanwhile the self-dramatizing gestures and language of his egotism are fully rendered and securely placed in the comic moral context—fully and securely, though not of course with the brilliance of joyous denunciation that Jenkins' continuing friendship with Widmerpool prohibits. Powell's comic spirit is re-

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markably modest and mild, and it stays comfortably within conventional social norms; but it is genuine and important because it speaks with the clear consistent voice of an unconfused human being.

All this would mean nothing, of course, without the talent that makes Powell an interesting artist in the first place. Much of his technique is perfectly and quietly traditional, but there are some devices which seem particularly his own. He is good at using the silence created by Jenkins' attentiveness to emphasize the arbitrary and absurdly violent gestures of the will. In *The Soldier's Art* Jenkins comes upon General Liddament reading Trollope: "Then, suddenly, he raised the book he had been reading in the air, holding it at arm's length above his head. For a moment I thought he was going to hurl it at me. Instead, he waved the small volume backwards and forwards, its ribbon marker flying at one end. 'Book reader, aren't you?' " The General's act is a dance-gesture of violence, perfectly harmless; Jenkins' exemption from self-dramatization makes him an alert and wary observer of the harmless violence going on about him all the time. He is an exceptionally attentive listener too, and what he hears is often something actually brought into existence by Powell's odd prose: " 'You can't sleep with this noise going on,' he said. He spoke peevishly, as if remedy, easily applicable, had been for some reason disregarded by the authority responsible." The noise going on is that of an air-raid; the language of the person speaking and the

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word "peevishly" are perfectly routine, but Powell's queer (and characteristic) next clause, through its structure and its bureaucratic diction, makes us hear the virtually supersonic nuance of comic inappropriateness in this response to the event.

Both *The Soldier's Art* and the preceding volume, *The Valley of Bones,* deal with Jenkins' experience in the British Army in World War II, and the question might arise how Powell's comic vision can come to terms with the not at all harmlessly self-dramatizing will, passion and power of war. It isn't a question that arose for me while I was reading and that means that I heard no failure of tone. Actually these war volumes gave me an increased respect for what I have been describing as Powell's security of tone and harmony of mind, for they redefined these qualities as Powell's honesty about and trust in his own way of looking at experience. It is this trust that I miss in the novels of Gold and Isherwood; and though I much respect their trying for larger and deeper feelings than Powell tries for, still the fact remains that in art as well as life honesty is the best policy. The honesty I am speaking of is of course not a policy but a gift—almost a matter of luck. And I am not then saying that Gold and Isherwood are dishonest, but merely that they aren't lucky enough to be as honest as Powell.

Powell hasn't had to adapt his comic methods to the larger seriousness of the war, because his methods show no disrespect for that seriousness, just as they show no disrespect for his own unspoken private concerns. It might, for instance, seem trivial in the work of another writer to describe war experiences in theatrical terms, as Powell does in *The Soldier's Art.* At the beginning of the novel Jenkins buys an Army greatcoat in a shop off Shaftesbury Avenue that also specializes in theatrical costumes, and the salesman thinks he is outfitting himself for a role in some new West End "show." Jenkins characteristically doesn't correct this impression, and the salesman comes to believe that the name of the show is *The War,* which he promises to "keep in mind." This episode is absolutely representative of Powell's mind and methods: its comedy is quiet, its irony mild rather than brilliant, but it does no dirt on life. Powell's war is a show and the real war too. He isn't nervous about having both perspectives and neither are we.

To Our Readers:

The following book by an editor of *The Hudson Review* has recently been published. In accordance with our policy, it will not be reviewed in these pages, but is listed here for the interest of our readers: **B. H. HAGGIN:** *The Toscanini Musicians Knew.* Horizon Press. $7.50.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

One Bear Too Many

TOLSTOY SURVIVED TO BECOME, at the focus of world publicity as the most famous living man, his own implacable judge: this complete artist of civilized society who came to anathematize social pleasures and the art that celebrates them; enthusiast of the flesh and of every traditional male preoccupation, *l'homme moyen sensuel* to the highest power, who became the latter-day apostle of celibacy, non-violence, and spiritual love. Yet, though he had renounced the body, it had not—even toward the disastrous end of the most public unhappy marriage since Socrates'—altogether renounced Tolstoy. Not till he was eighty-one could he inform his English biographer that he was no longer susceptible to sexual desire; at eighty-two, two weeks before his death, he recorded in his "secret" diary (his "regular" diary was of course read and copied daily by friends, family, disciples) a final vignette of the unregenerate flesh:

> Yesterday I began doing exercises—the old fool wanted to get younger—and I pulled a cupboard over on myself and hurt myself for nothing. There's an eighty-two-year-old fool for you!

It is impossible to know too much about Tolstoy. Everything fits, surprises, and magnifies. He could not have helped, even in front of a movie camera, living all our lives; and his corresponding prescience of death must have required the desperate measures he took:

> When Thomas Mann patronises Tolstoy's moralising and his attempts to disown the flesh, and praises Goethe's majestic and self-justifying development, the soft impeachment is exasperating; and not only because Mann—"the ironic German"—was himself so evidently preoccupied with the Goethean national succession and with himself as the incumbent of Goethean poise. For surely the collapse of the sense of existence in Tolstoy is the surest proof both of how superb and how universal it had been? All of us are subject to such a temporary collapse: Tolstoy experienced it on an overwhelming scale. Tolstoy's embodiment of a kind of universal physical existence would be nothing if it had not been so continually haunted and obsessed by the question of what there was, what there might be, outside himself. A Tolstoy who continued to write novels of the same kind would be an intolerable phenomenon, for his egotism seems to encompass all physical existence. But what grows with it, haunts it, and finally dominates it, is the admission of its limitations, the confrontation of self with what is not self, of life with death. Tolstoy is not ill, not perverse; he plays out in himself, and on his scale, the

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most universal and inevitable of human dramas. He *is* the state of our existence: he does not, like Goethe, attempt to conquer it and to put himself above it. Ultimately, as Thomas Mann comes near to admitting, Goethe cared for nothing but himself. Tolstoy *was* nothing but himself, and his sense of what awaited him, and what was outside him, is correspondingly more intimate to us all, and more moving.

The author of this paragraph is John Bayley, in a book[1] which at once takes its place as the best in English on any Russian novelist. As Mr. Bayley says, "a Tolstoy who continued to write novels" like *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina,* a Tolstoy whose gigantic appetite for physical experience persisted to the edge of the grave, would be "an intolerable phenomenon." Ernest Simmons has an anecdote about an admirer of Tolstoy's on his last visit to the great man:

"We must prepare ourselves. A pleasant end soon awaits us," Tolstoy remarked to the eighty-one-year-old Stasov when he was visiting him at Yasnaya Polyana in 1904. "What end?" Stasov queried, still full of the joy of life in spite of his age.

"Death, of course. I'm sure that even you expect it."

"To hell with it!" Stasov exclaimed. "An abomination, a filthy thing to prepare oneself for! I often sleep badly and toss about in bed when I think that death will come."

"But don't you feel your old age and that the end is near?" asked Tolstoy.

"I feel nothing of the kind, nor do I deny myself anything as formerly, and I hope that you, Leo Nikolayevich, don't give up anything. You still ride horseback and play lawn tennis."[2]

Stasov is heroic and touching; but Tolstoy has been through all that a thousand times, he has arrived without smugness or unbreakable calm at a "sense of what awaited him," "what was outside him," mysteries which Goethe or Mann can only convert into literature.

A Mann or a James works by keeping his judicious distance from everything; he belongs nowhere; because none of his subject is in his bones, he need never consider its ultimate irrelevance to matters of life and death, or doubt its perpetual fascination. "Neither Balzac nor Henry James could possibly have said, as Tolstoy did, that they were 'not interested' in many of the pursuits and classes of Society. Because they remain in their lives *outside* the world, they take possession of it in their books, they must necessarily be interested in everything *inside* it. Those who are inside anyway—like Tolstoy and, in her different way, Jane Austen—have no need to feel this compulsive interest."

. . . it is one of . . . [Tolstoy's] most mesmeric characteristics that he writes about Moscow and Petersburg social and family life as if it

[1] TOLSTOY AND THE NOVEL, by *John Bayley*. Viking. $6.95.

[2] Ernest J. Simmons, *Leo Tolstoy* (Vintage, Vol. II, 1960), p. 354.

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were a universal thing, and as if his readers would understand what he understood in it. Possibly Homer made the same assumptions. Certainly Balzac and Proust did not. They are showing us over their acquired territories: Tolstoy belongs to his. If Balzac had been a banker he would not have wanted to explain to us all the processes of banking; if Proust had been a duke it would not have occurred to him to conduct us with such relish through all the tones and nuances of the French aristocracy. In Tolstoy's hands Moscow and Petersburg family life becomes a universal thing. Irrespective of social level some families are like this, some like that: and the conventions of collective existence in each powerfully affect the fates and fortunes of individual members, when these go on to lead their own lives. Jane Austen, like Tolstoy, took this for granted. In *Mansfield Park* she shows us nothing of the Crawfords' upbringing, but she makes quite clear what effect its shortcomings had on the crucial decisions of their adult lives.

Tolstoy, so Mr. Bayley demonstrates, belongs to his world as he belongs to his body. His confidence is the confidence of the self in its own indispensable reliability, and his genius is to sense and define this confidence in others. "The prisoners who are shot just before we meet Karataev . . . are unable to understand or believe what is going to happen to them—'they could not believe it because they alone knew what their life meant to them, and so they neither understood nor believed that it could be taken from them.' 'They alone knew what their life meant to them'—that is the point, and that is the secret of how Tolstoy gives them their freedom." Tolstoy's unimpeded solipsism is like God's (and quite unlike vanity), he makes his creatures after his own image:

> We shall find this *samodovolnost,* this self-sufficiency, everywhere in his novels, but particularly in *War and Peace.* Everywhere we shall find references to his characters being pleased with themselves. It is the condition of their vitality—deprived of it, they cease to exist. It is neither formulated nor approved; it is simply an attribute of life, of the fully sentient being. Yet to say it is not approved is to stretch the facts: of course Tolstoy is wholly on its side; he cannot help endorsing it; it is an aspect of his own huge confidence in himself and his own being. This confidence is deeply aristocratic, not so much in the class sense—though that of course comes into it—but in the sense in which complete self-sufficiency is the most aristocratic of feelings. . . . Most of Tolstoy's women—and especially Natasha—possess this *samodovolnost* in its most potent form. No one is more aware than Tolstoy that young girls, however seemingly innocent and unaware, have an intense physical selfconsciousness. . . . I suspect that much of the resentment that some readers feel for Tolstoy's heroic characters—and particularly Natasha—is due to their calm

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> invincible aristocratic conceit. She does not condescend to be intelligent, says Pierre admiringly of Natasha.

For such a paragon of Tolstoyan self-sufficiency, even love is close to pure impulse and appetite, a trap that springs itself: "Natasha's love is generalised, founded on her own sense of herself and—less consciously—on her almost explosive expectancy, her need not to be *wasted.*" The world is merely what the ego cannot do without.

Mr. Bayley's argument is, then, straightforward and clear. Tolstoy's "almost disconcerting simplicity," he says, "comes from . . . [his] massive and casual assumption that the world is as he sees it, and as he says it is. He needs no theory about how to see the world and how to convey its reality." *War and Peace* is the great moment of confidence, of "equivocal harmony," in which everything moves freely and everything is in its place, in which the world is at the service of every intense consciousness. *Tolstoy and the Novel* is a triumphant brief not so much for Tolstoy as for the celebrant of personal exuberance and family happiness, the creator of Natasha and her spacious social milieu, the philosopher-historian for whom freedom means not to be "wasted," means "discovering how life intends to imprison one, and going gladly and whole-heartedly into that imprisonment": the author of *War and Peace.* Mr. Bayley is never less than brilliant and ebulliently analytic (his discriminations are so minute and so unremitting that, now and then, they fatigue the reader into the suspicion that they may be more subtle than their texts); but he has his thesis, and he intends to clear the decks of everything else. So the pretenders—Balzac, James, Conrad, and the like—are briskly disposed of, with a show of respect. The grand challenger—Dostoevsky—is allowed far more room and scrutiny, but comes off not much better than Balzac. What Tolstoy writes before *War and Peace* is, for all its excellences, an imperfect foreshadowing. What he writes after is a falling away from that benign and unthreatened equilibrium: for Mr. Bayley regards even *Anna Karenina* as flawed by Tolstoy's "growing sense of personal crisis," which prescribes not a "subject that interests and appeals to him, but . . . one that obsesses him"; and *The Kreutzer Sonata* and *The Death of Ivan Ilyich,* "terrible and powerful," are nevertheless "failures, because their heroes do not seem at home in the world into which Tolstoy has forced them."

Not that Mr. Bayley is unaware of what the Russian critic Shestov calls the *mensonge* of *War and Peace:* its prudery, for instance; its not quite ingenuous satisfaction with the most commonplace conjugal and familial virtues, especially in the Epilogue; its magician's pretense of comprehensiveness (if Dostoevsky didn't exist, the scrupulous reader of Tolstoy would have to invent him). The conclusion of *War and Peace,* says Mr. Bayley, "is moving and unique, because we feel as if the problems that Tolstoy was to wrestle with for the rest of his life are just about to break in. Tolstoy and ourselves are like conductor

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and orchestra at a sublime concert, for whom urgent messages and queries are being held over until the final movement reaches its close."

Just so; and, if so, *War and Peace* is a stupendous idyll, a *tour de force* on the scale of Mt. Everest. The messages and queries may be held over, but even in the face of sublimity we can remember the unsettled internal weather of our lives. *War and Peace* attracts and awes us; it is, as Mr. Bayley finely says, "the solid kingdom of the flesh," which we would do well to claim and inhabit; it is a promise, like Blake's "lineaments of satisfied desire." On the other hand, *The Idiot* —or *The Kreutzer Sonata,* or *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*—is a succession of urgent messages and questions, it reminds us of what we must cope with, put up with, shore our sanity against.

Mr. Bayley argues, however, that Ivan Ilyich is unconvincing not because of what he does but because in his given identity he would not do it: as Tolstoy says, "when characters do what from their spiritual nature they are unable to do, it is a terrible thing." Ivan Ilyich, if he were faithful to the nature with which Tolstoy has endowed him, would never be awakened by the imminence of death; he

> . . . would disappear among such scraps of recollection from his childhood as Tolstoy gives him ("the taste of French plums and how they wrinkle the mouth up")—disappear without other dignity than the right and proper one of being himself. That dignity requires that his death should take place on the same level as "the visitings, the curtains, the sturgeon for dinner," because these were the materials of his life. He is not Prince Andrew. We feel for him as we might for an animal compelled by its master to perform some unnatural trick.

But one need not be Prince Hamlet or Andrew to begin to doubt one's life as it approaches its end. If Ivan Ilyich is Everyman, and if Everyman evades thought by attaching himself to routine, then the sudden amputation of routine may be a strong enough shock to provoke thought; and, once the mind begins to move, it might well drift into self-consciousness and self-doubt. Mr. Bayley does not admire the parabolic Tolstoy; and *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* looks like a ferociously unrelieved parable, in which characters seem to be just what they stand for, feelings are "unnaturally" sustained, revelations are "unnaturally" abrupt and uncompromising. Mr. Bayley regrets the absence of Tolstoy's geniality, which vanished with the Epilogue of *War and Peace;* he refuses to accept in its place Tolstoy's furious urgency, which besets the ordinary man with extraordinary trials, knocks him down for what he is and lifts him up for what he is coming to be, makes him a consistent and terrifying representative of human solitude but never forces him to do tricks (neither is Pierre, talking cheerful domestic nonsense with Natasha, doing tricks in that other story with a very different, and not necessarily more accurate, view of individual and social and family life).

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For Mr. Bayley, the Tolstoy of *War and Peace* is the non-sectarian Lord of Creation, whereas the later Tolstoy takes on the likeness of the schizophrenic Deity of the two Testaments, half Thunderer and half creeping Jesus. Gorky's comment, however, is more helpful: that God and Tolstoy were "like two bears in one den." The old man never lost his divine cunning; but, in the years after his physical prime, he grew more and more alert to the other presence, the silent and undefeatable rival.

CALVIN BEDIENT

The Two Novels

THERE ARE, AS EVERYONE KNOWS, two novels, the "traditional" and the "modern," and nowadays no literary question is so challenging as that of the nature of modernism. This question is a wilderness from which no man has yet returned alive. Its great appeal lies in its danger, in its virginity, and above all in the possibility that, one day, parting the leaves in these new thickets of the imagination, we shall come upon—ourselves.

Alan Friedman's book[1] is the latest report from the interior, and if at first it is absorbing, if its content is fresh, its final effect is to make one feel inclined to put on his own boots and see for himself: it has a serenity unbecoming to a man surrounded by the unfamiliar, a suspicious simplicity. In truth, Mr. Friedman has made only one discovery, he has found only one hoard of ivory, and in the excitement of his find (so it seems) has neglected to look any farther. He claims to have hit upon the "distinctively modern vision in the modern novel." This, it turns out, is "openness"—not of the structure of meaning, but of the structure of experience. The novel, he argues, has an "underlying form," namely, the flux of interaction between the inner self and the outer world. (This definition raises a good deal of dust. For example, what is an "underlying" form? Underlying what? The action and the themes? Surely this would be a forced distinction.) In the traditional novel, Mr. Friedman says, the flux of experience "expands" and then "contracts" (these metaphors, inexact at best, are repeated endlessly). The self is overturned by the lance of the world, then righted, perhaps sorer than before, but wiser; the "stream of responses" in the characters is turbulent, then calm. Thus the traditional novel truly ends; it is cadential. In the modern novel, on the other hand, the flux

[1] THE TURN OF THE NOVEL, by *Alan Friedman*. Oxford University Press. $6.50.

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of experience remains open: the energies released, the commotions engendered, are finally either "uncontained," "unreduced," or "still expanding." Since the late Hardy, since the early Conrad, "Endlessness has become an end in itself."

This shift in the form of the novel reflects—as Mr. Friedman says—a change in man's interpretation of experience, and, perhaps, a change in experience itself. Now, Mr. Friedman declares that it is too early to analyze the causes that have altered man's view of experience. This may be true. But what are we to think of an adventurer who, in this situation, fails even to explore, one by one, the new interpretations themselves? The trouble is that Mr. Friedman assumes the currency of only one modern interpretation of experience. Since this does not actually exist, Mr. Friedman is understandably at a loss to analyze it, not to mention its causes. Looking at modern novels, he has noted a recurring profile, a "form"—and, facilely, or perhaps despairingly, he has called this form a "vision." And here his report virtually ends. The result is a hollow book, whose single idea of the modern is stated over and over in the first thirty-seven pages, and then somewhat mechanically, though murkily, applied to the conclusions of certain novels by Hardy, Conrad, Forster, and Lawrence.

Mr. Friedman says that he feels reservations "about limiting discussions of modernity in the novel exclusively to matters of technique." Yet not only is the heart of his study a rootless concern with two opposed forms; one effect of his book is to make content seem a mere response to form. Experience (and hence "form") in modern fiction is simply "open"; no use questioning why, exactly. Open form is the iron mold into which, willy-nilly, novelists pour their varying contents. Now, if you close your eyes to the causes of a phenomenon and note merely its frequency, its opaque and assertive presence, it will acquire two characteristics: mystery and the appearance of autonomy. Thus "open experience" in modern fiction is, to Mr. Friedman, a "myth." What is more, the closed form of experience is also a myth. Is, then, every interpretation of experience a myth? Or are we to believe that real experience is neither open nor closed? If it is neither, what is it? If it is both—at various times, or in various senses (Mr. Friedman does not say *what* it is)—then why call either interpretation a myth?

The novels of Forster and Joyce, of Virginia Woolf, Lawrence, and Faulkner, are indeed all open in form—but not because penned under the spell of a "myth of openness." The openness in their fiction originates in their techniques or, more fundamentally and tellingly, in their diverse and even discordant metaphysics and aims. For instance, consider the technique of the interior monologue. Taking like warm wax the inner impression of experience, the interior monologue, as a form, is as endless and random as consciousness itself: it is a technique of immersion, a technique for *listening* to experience. As a consequence, *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway* and *As I Lay Dying* are all necessarily "open" in form—not, again, at the behest of a myth, but simply

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because, when viewed from inside, experience really is open, and the curtain will not come down. And though it is true that Joyce and Virginia Woolf and Faulkner all used the same technique because they shared certain contemporary interests—for example, in what Virginia Woolf called the "dark places of psychology," in the beat and feel of our moment-to-moment participation in life, and in the order life itself turns up from hour to hour—it is by no means true that these interests were inescapable or universal, the compulsive myth of the times. The openness in Forster, on the other hand, is independent of technique. If Forster and his protagonists remain "open," the reason is that their aim is inclusiveness, and wholeness is always out of reach. Characters in traditional fiction certainly have their quests, but their goals are personal, social, or moral, and hence attainable—the traditional hero is not piqued by the stars, nor, when he finally comes to rest, does he feel ashamed of his complacency. By contrast, the heroes of Forster, like those of Virginia Woolf and Lawrence, or of the recent Golding, or of Kafka, are all journeying to an impossible goal: metaphysical ease. So surely the turn of the novel from a social and moral to a cosmic and metaphysical arena helps to explain much of the openness in modern fiction. As for Lawrence, he is a special case; for the openness in Lawrence is almost alone in modern fiction in being entirely positive. To him, all life is open because it is one "great being," eternal and infinite. We are all sparks thrown off by the cosmic fire; we will go out, but while we live, self, Lawrence says, is a "oneness with the infinite." It is thus a metaphysical certainty—and not, as in Forster, an atmosphere of uncertainty—that accounts for the "endlessness' of experience in Lawrence. Now, why reduce these and other causes of modern literary openness to the single dark urgency of "myth"? There is a black magic in the word that puts thought to sleep.

Mr. Friedman makes another reduction when he insists on the fictional flux of experience as an "ethical form," a "stream of conscience." Now, doubtless experience in, say, the work of Henry James or George Eliot may be described as moral. But in Faulkner? In Lawrence? In Joyce? To Mr. Friedman, all responses to experience are moral ones, and he stretches the concept of morality to so transparent a thinness that, for the most part, his term "conscience" fails to convey anything at all, except his anxiety not to limit his analysis "exclusively to matters of technique." One misses in this book the sort of stringent, illuminating demarcations of the moral that (for example) Kierkegaard makes in *Either/Or*. To my mind, anyway, "openness" and "morality" are conflicting terms; it is only aesthetic, or intellectual, or mystical experience that can be construed as open. And, very often, the modern novelist is either an aestheticist or a metaphysician who is not only uncertain about moral truth but, like Virginia Woolf and Pasternak, even more indifferent than otherwise to strictly moral questions. If experience seems open to him, the reason is precisely that it cannot be morally contained: it exceeds morality.

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Mr. Friedman also ventures to call open form "an ethical statement in its own right." All he appears to mean by this is that the novelist, believing that experience is open, refuses to lie about it. But form by itself affirms nothing. For my part, I should call open form an accidental metaphor, not for an ethical, but for a philosophical position—that is, not a statement at all (certainly not a moral statement), but an analogue to the nature of reality.

The value of Mr. Friedman's study is, I think, its blunt emphasis on the fact and prevalence of open experience in the modern novel: the book has the narrow and focusing intensity of a spotlight. About closed experience we already knew: as Susanne Langer pointed out in *Feeling and Form,* no form is more closed than tragedy; and as for comedy, it is precisely the comic rhythm of upset and recovery that Mr. Friedman ascribes to the traditional novel. Moreover, his "closed form" is, to all appearances, synonymous with Kenneth Burke's "syllogistic form." But "open form" still has the dew upon it. With this book Mr. Friedman enters a new form in the critical lexicon: progressive form without a conclusion.

And yet how many problems lie menacing just outside the bright small circle of light. How many, for that matter, lurk within it, hidden by the glare. For example, to what extent is the flux of experience *itself* a "form," underlying or otherwise? Can Mr. Friedman be saying that fiction and life are equally formal? Surely not; and yet. . . .

Mr. Friedman's identification of fictional form with the flux of experience has had, I think, two debilitating effects. First, it has rendered him powerless to distinguish between form and content. If the flux of experience in a novel is its *form,* what then is left to be its content? *The Turn of the Novel* implies that all modern novelists are attempting to convey the same thing, namely, the openness of experience: the form is the message. Since there are only two forms of experience, open and closed, it follows that there are only two fictional messages. This is critical poverty.

The second debility is somewhat less severe. Define form as the flux of experience, and all novels, dramas, epics, will appear equally formal. Thus to Mr. Friedman, it seems, the modern novel is no more and no less formal than its predecessor, only *different* in form. Here, stuck to the birdlime of his terms, he misses an important difference in the aesthetic forms of the two novels. For in one sense, the modern novel clearly lacks the formal strengths and attractions of traditional fiction; in another sense, however, it is even more formal. The traditional plot, with its obvious beginning, development, and conclusion, satisfied both the human hunger for design and the human hunger for finality. By contrast, the modern novel, as is generally known, has little use for plot. And yet modern fiction at its greatest is even more composed than traditional fiction; it is a "work in counterpoint," in Mann's words, "a thematic fabric" in which, very often, "the idea of the musical motif plays a great role." Form in the modern novel has

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been subtilized, refined by the poetic power of nuance and symbolism; and as orchestrations of theme and image and feeling, modern novels often end as poems end, with a delicate and "right" aesthetic finality. In this sense, modern fiction is even more "closed" than traditional fiction, which often resorts to crude convention—marriage, death—in order to end at all. It is intrinsically closed; its surface has that tension and pressure from within that we see in the surface of a balloon.

In addition, Mr. Friedman seems incapacitated by his assumptions from noting what modern novelists have sometimes substituted for the third pleasure—after narrative design and finality—of traditional plot: its therapy for conscience. The older novel usually presents one of two kinds of moral experience: the deviation from and the return to a moral norm (Tom Jones, Emma Woodhouse, Richard Feverel, Silas Marner); and the defence of virtue against an evil world (Pamela, Jane Eyre). The modern novel, by contrast, often presents the equally satisfying vicarious experience of instinctual liberation. If the end of *Tom Jones* plays to conscience, the end of *A Room with a View* plays to instinct. There are two audiences within us, one sitting in the light, the other in the dark, and each has its own novel, its psychological (rather than "ethical") form.

Or the modern novel will substitute for the defunct pleasures of conscience the masochistic pleasure of seeing life (so we think) without illusions. Like Mr. Ramsay of *To the Lighthouse,* the modern novelist tells us that the day will not be fine. Solemn-eyed, we listen, and are grateful. We *thought* it would not be fine; now we know. Someone has faced up to it, and this proves fortifying.

Is it true that open experience defines "the distinctively modern vision in the modern novel"? I think not. In the first place, openness itself is not—as Mr. Friedman implies—a vision, "ethical" or otherwise. Perhaps there really is what Lukács has called an "ideology of modernism"; but if so it has proliferated into multiple visions, not one, and "openness"—so far as I can discern—is merely an abstraction from their general character: not the core, but the circumference of various modern visions. In the second place, the modern in literature is much too complex to be defined by a single characteristic. Consider a vivid illustration of this. According to Mr. Friedman, *Moll Flanders* is an open novel with a "last-minute, unconvincing containment, as if Defoe were under compulsion to depict that." Now, this is also what Mr. Friedman says about *To the Lighthouse:* "Apparently the novelist feels strongly the need to assert that she *has* ended." Yet, despite the similarity of their "form," clearly these two novels are (in more than the literal sense) centuries apart. Mr. Friedman cannot tell us what makes the one novel modern and the other old-fashioned; in pointing out the "form" of each he has exhausted his terms. No, though one is glad to have this report, it is not enough. The wilderness, the challenge, is still there, beckoning.

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PAUL LEVINE

Old-Fashioned Ideas

SCRATCH A HIP CRITIC of contemporary culture—if that's your idea of a good time—and he will tell you that we live in an age of literary apocalypse. "The big investigation today," Augie March learns, "is into how *bad* a guy can be, not how good he can be. You don't keep up with the times. You're going against history." However, the three recent novels under discussion, while treating such unconventional subjects as scientists, spelunkers, and fathers, all explore the old-fashioned idea that error, not evil, is characteristically human.[1]

Joseph Whitehill's *Precious Little* begins with one of those riddles about contemporary society that has deeper implications.

> "There is a story of a famous scientist who divorced his wife because she asked him a question he could not answer. She asked him how come was it that when she parked the car downtown it always took her four tries to get *in* the parking place, but when she wanted *out* she always made it okay the first try."

Characteristically, the riddle is solved by another scientist:

> "It's because when she is trying to park she is trying to climb from a level of low organization to one of high organization. The reverse happens when she leaves; she goes from a state of high organization to a lower one."

Since Mr. Whitehill describes a scientific expedition's attempt to create "an efficient, purposive society, a pocket civilization," on a remote Pacific island, the conundrum has broader application in the novel. Thus *Precious Little* would seem to belong to that branch of fiction which pits modern civilization against primitive nature, whether it be on Juan Fernandez or Jupiter; as such, it might have pointed reference to such modern moral allegories as *Lord of the Flies*. But while Mr. Whitehill is concerned with the dubious virtures of civilization, he avoids the pitfalls of allegory by concentrating on the problems of keeping "six good men healthy and busy for fourteen months of their lives." Unlike *Lord of the Flies, Precious Little* is concerned less with the weighty problem of inherent good and evil than with the more immediate problem of the breakdown of communication between cultures. When the scientific project collapses in tragedy, the leader of the group tries to explain what went wrong:

[1] PRECIOUS LITTLE, by *Joseph Whitehill*. Charles Scribner's Sons. $4.50. AMID A PLACE OF STONE, by *Frank Butler*. Thomas Y. Crowell. $6.95. FATHERS, by *Herbert Gold*. Random House. $5.95.

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"Isn't it obvious by now? Think about all the old explorers. That's what I've been doing. Leif Ericson, Columbus, Magellan—up to Peary and Scott and Amundsen. They had their troubles, too. They made expensive mistakes, too. You listening? But they all had one big advantage over us. When they left home, they *really* left home. They were completely on their own. They didn't live with one foot on the mainland and one foot here, the way we have. They didn't look back for help, or count on support from the motherland. The motherland doesn't *care*. They knew it, and they went out alone. Maybe that was our mistake. My mistake."

Behind this misunderstanding lies the problem of communication between different levels of organization. And behind *that* problem, the leader sees a kind of Americanized Faustian obsession with moving towards an ever higher state of technological culture—but at what expense?

"I believe that Western industrialized man is born with a kind of spiritual astigmatism that irritates and unbalances him all his life. And because he was born with it, he never discovers what's causing his irritation and unbalance. It's been described lots of ways, by religious people and philosophers, but I think the essence of it is this: There was no hell on earth until one man with the devil in him invented the idea of *perfection*. Until then there could be contentment in the world. Afterward it was impossible. What Adam and Eve saw after they ate of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge was this: They saw that Eden could be vastly improved with some road building and landscaping and sewage disposal and zoning. . . ."

One of Mr. Whitehill's problems is that this syndrome *has* been "described lots of ways, by religious people and philosophers," as well as by most contemporary writers of novels, including science fiction. If *Precious Little* does not add anything new to the argument, it is helpful in describing in a clear, lean style the day-to-day business of improvising a new technological society. Moreover, in making his group of scientists all men of good will if of limited imagination, Mr. Whitehill has retained the integrity of his theme at the expense of their characterization. One wonders, for instance, if the parallel between the scientists' code of action and the Boy Scout oath is intentional:

"But will you always remember this? We must always be our best. . . . We must all stay healthy and never burden each other. We can never be loose in our minds. We have to be always taut, always thinking, always operating at our very best, always using training and intelligence and sense. We're a long way from help. We must be more civilized now than we ever were at home, because here—here we have a real jungle to keep back."

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In *Amid a Place of Stone,* Frank Butler also describes a situation laden with allegorical overtones: the rescue of an injured youth from a deep cave. The narrative focus is on the victim with whom each of the rescuers must privately come to terms; but the symbolic locus is the cave itself, "the real, unspeakable old stuff of potent poetry and mean magic." Thus the outward action mirrors the inner. One character speaks for all when he says, "I had sought caves for such an experience—not so tragic, but as comprehensive—and so, sooner or later in my exploration of their dark potentiality, had been likely to discover one appropriate to my private purpose."

The situation is familiar to those who read Robert Penn Warren's *The Cave* or remember an old Kirk Douglas film called *Ace in the Hole.* But *Amid a Place of Stone* differs from these in its almost exclusive concern with the personal implications of the rescue. The victim, an All-American boy with all the vices of that virtue, becomes a kind of *alter ego* for each of his rescuers until it is clear that each is recapitulating his descent into a private cave. In the end, the rescuers can only rescue themselves when introspection turns into involvement: as one participant observes, the quest for the doomed boy "had led me from the republic of anxiety into the kingdom of concern. He had led me out from guilt into grief."

The cave can, of course, be a rich metaphor and Mr. Butler describes the way in which each character comes to understand how it functions privately for him. Not surprisingly, literary allusions abound, from Plato's Cave to Poe's Pit; indeed, the novel leads a subterranean existence far more resonant than its surface life. The main trouble, in fact, is that the allusions swamp the illusion. Despite its reasonable construction and its regional color, the novel seems finally too abstract. The characters are difficult to place; they interact awkwardly, like strangers on a short elevator ride. There are, too, problems of pacing and style. The middle sags under the weight of too many characters and too much talk; and the multiple narrative styles sometimes become distractingly hypersensitive, as when someone's eyes are described as having "dried to worried raisins in the scrubbed innocence of his face." Even so, the serious defects of this long and ambitious first novel do not hide the fact that its author is a writer of insight and intelligence.

One of the clichés of modern criticism is that there are no fathers in American literature. Our heroes are all orphans, real or self-declared, named Ishmael or Huck or Holden. Recently, however, writers like James Agee, John Updike, and J. D. Salinger have begun to deal with the subversive theme of the family. To this list of radical innocents we may now add the name of Herbert Gold.

To be sure, Mr. Gold has written about family life before, in *Therefore Be Bold* and in several stories in *Love and Like.* Out of these stories grows a full-length family portrait with the simple title,

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Fathers, and the sub-title, *a novel in the form of a memoir.* The sub-title is meant to indicate the method: a fusion of "history and the shaping imagination" in which "the several fathers and others in the book, including the teller of the tale, are imaginary immigrants, travelers, cripplers, strivers, children." The title carries the theme: that "the circle of life is never completed, but the spiral turns round, remembering other turnings."

Though *Fathers* deals with four generations of family patriarchs, Mr. Gold is primarily concerned with his own life with father. After so many revelations about Jewish mothers it is a pleasure and relief to turn to the unsung hero of the family. Of course, Mama is there, "serving even when there is nothing to serve" and urging her son to marry "a nice Jewish girl from a good family, plays the piano, not flat-chested, educated." But she stands in the long shadow of her husband, a man already at twelve when he decided to forsake Mother Russia for the New World "and take the name of Gold, in honor of the freedom given to men by the gold in the streets of New York." "The gold in the streets of America turned out to be Sam Gold, born something else," and his odyssey carries him even further to the Middle West which we sometimes mistake for the "real" America.

Fathers is a sensitive and affectionate portrait, virtually unadorned by the verbal self-indulgence which is its author's worst trait. Old Gold turns out to be a man of parts: a cool lady's man in his youth and a cool business man in his maturity, masterly with the fruits and vegetables he sells but faltering in his relations with his own family, above all, a man for whom "nothing is enough like it is for most men."

> On his last visit to me in San Francisco, when he stood on my little terrace looking after the Japanese freighter heading east through the Golden Gate, my eighty-year-old father was still plotting his victories for the next twenty years. He had taken great pains to stay alive in these times. He had dared the world and his own weaknesses to defeat him, and sometimes he accepted defeat, because his failures were as necessary to him as his riding free.

Though *Fathers* may lack the pungency of Saul Bellow's description of family life in *Augie March* and *Herzog* and the brilliance of John Updike's portrait of George Caldwell in *The Centaur,* it remains an affecting fictive memoir. What sustains it is a consistent vision of the continuity of generations, and this old-fashioned idea appears to survive even in an age of apocalypse.

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BERT O. STATES

Rhetoric, Poetic, and Fortune's Wheel

MR. MCDONALD, ONE SUSPECTS, WOULD BE HAPPY to have the whole of Elizabethan literature coming out from under the Rhetorician's cloak.[1] "It is curious," he says, "to think that conscientious and perhaps somewhat ridiculous schoolmasters of the Sir Hugh Evans or Holofernes type . . . are in large measure responsible for the marvellous richness of Elizabethan tragedy . . ." (p. 137). As he goes on, the measure becomes larger and larger. "Sophistic antilogistic rhetoric as used by the Stuart dramatists is a formal principle that governs not only words, and paired speeches, but paired scenes, acts, and, consequently, whole plays . . ." (p. 210). He speaks, accordingly, of the "aesthetic triumphs" of Chapman and Tourneur as being inspired by "sophistic rhetorical formalism" whose "elaborate antilogistic patterning everywhere coalesces with imagery, symbol, and meaning to produce fully compelling dramatic structures" (p. 263). On the other hand, the aesthetic failures of Beaumont, Fletcher, Webster, and Ford are explained, in part, by a swing in the "aim" of rhetorical practice from "suasion to ornamentation" (p. 262). Webster, in particular, simply "muddles opportunities offered him by the contemporary antilogistic modes of rhetorical patterning" (p. 270). Ford is better, but even so the victim of Rhetoric's dying fall. No one comes up to the triumvirate of Shakespeare, Chapman, and Tourneur, who listened well to Schoolmaster Evans and went on to write great masterpieces of suasion.

Even the tastes of the audience were dictated by the common love of rhetoric. The most popular of all ancient plays in the renaissance, Euripides' *Hecuba,* owes its status to its "obvious rhetoricism," its "formal pleadings and counterpleadings" (p. 108), and but slenderly to the fact that it is, as William Arrowsmith elsewhere points out, "a supreme example of the severest degradation the reversal of human fortune can inflict"—something, I have always assumed, which more or less obsessed the Elizabethans. Moreover, the critics who have since written so voluminously about these playwrights (and with "the most amazingly extravagant overestimation" in the case of Webster, whom McDonald beats to a pulp of ineptitude with Tourneur's sceptre) do not really understand the complexities of the plays' structure because they are applying "a somewhat simplified version of the compositional rules which the dramatists used in writing them in the first place"—in short, the rules of Sophistic rhetoric. And finally, lest anyone still doubt at the end that it was Dame Rhetoric who brought this miracle to light, there is an *Afterword* in which the "primacy" of *oral* di-

[1] THE RHETORIC OF TRAGEDY: FORM IN STUART DRAMA, by *Charles Osborne McDonald.* University of Massachusetts Press. $7.50.

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alogue in the drama is raised over the corpse of Aristotle who foisted upon us the myth that drama was a predominantly "linear" and "visual" affair. Here, as you may have guessed, Mr. McDonald joins the fresher forces of Marshall McLuhan for an assault on the twentieth century, drama's third great homecoming to "the bare word" and "self-consciously stylized rhetoricism."

There is a good deal in all of this which should not be dismissed lightly. Without a doubt, the influence of rhetorical theory on the English drama was powerful and we have probably not given it its due; and it very likely derives from the ancients along the very route Mr. McDonald traces—from Gorgias and Protagoras to Euripides to Seneca and Quintilian to Ascham *et al;* and it would be idle to contest the impressive case made here for the self-conscious formalism and the oral appeal of the Stuart drama. But somehow, the reader *wants* to contest these things in sheer reaction to the tone and scope of the argument. So aggressively does Mr. McDonald annex dramatic techniques to Rhetorica that one feels a little as Europe must have felt in the wake of the early Hitler. Hamlet's delay, for instance, is caused by his *ethos* (his normal, reasonable character) soothing his *pathos* (his passion and unpredictable emotion), thus robbing him of the ability to take violent action (p. 130). When one character praises another, it is *laus;* a bawling out is *vituperatio;* anything oracular is *demonstratio.* When Hamlet picks up poor Yorick's skull it is *illustratio* and the words he speaks are an *ethopoeia.* And so on. Nothing, absolutely nothing, escapes the finger of Nomenclature. This paragraph—frightening thought—is probably a *Restructio,* and with insufficient *evidentia* to boot.

But beyond even this (which, if it yielded a *way in* to the plays, would be tolerable), the book is out to prove that the Sophistic principle of antilogistic argument (debating *both* sides of a question) is *the* informing principle of Elizabethan drama. Thus, from cell-structure to organism, the plays are intricate antilogisms: the phrasal and paragraph oppositions, the contrasts in plot, character, and scene structure, the vacillating hero who appears to so many critics to be "inconsistent" but is really simply *acting out* a debate; finally, the great themes themselves—appearance-reality, life-death, time-eternity, court-country, wealth-poverty, vice-virtue, vengeance-law, etc. All of this springs from sophistry. It occurs to Mr. McDonald, at one point, that he is performing some pretty heady acrobatics without a net and we get the following:

> It might be asked whether I consider that the rhetoric of these parallel speeches gave rise to the dramatic situation in which they are imbedded or *vice versa.* In answer it must be stated that we can never know certainly, but just as certainly, whichever came first, only a mind conditioned to see dramatic actions in terms of the antilogistic rhetorical traditions I have analyzed and their dramatic possibilities would have devised such an arrangement (p. 170).

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Well, all right: the Elizabethans learned their rhetoric and, like everything else borrowed from antiquity, they used it noisily. But is not the question itself rather small for so great a labor (346 pp.)? What seems forgotten on every page of this book is the sense in which *everything* of this kind is deeply rooted in its time, cross-fertilized and mutated beyond recognition, or at least beyond the degree of recognition insisted upon here. For it all, there is something ironically *un*sophistic in the author's refusal to see that he is on a two-way street, to remind the reader now and then that the drama may have done a few of these wonderful things on an instinct older than Gorgias. Surely we can assume that the classical rhetoricians themselves were simply looking out upon the myriad forms of verbal discourse which men had been using for centuries around council fires, in law courts, in honorary and religious ceremonies, and even in dramas, and giving them names, putting labels on strategies of appeal which have their origin in common sense, not in the movements which systematize them.

Russell Fraser is dealing with these same antilogisms, but he is tracing them out of a far more complex fabric.[2] His considerable intuition is devoted to showing the respect in which Shakespearean drama offers us the spectacle of something becoming its opposite and the implications of that spectacle for Shakespeare's moral vision. Misapprehension, he calls it: the confusing of Kind, the turning of Order into Anarchy, the pandering of Will by Reason, the mistaking of Show for Substance, the hero mysteriously coming up against the fell and mighty opposites of Fortune and Providence (I am quoting chapter titles here), and thereby suffering that circular agony of man in awe of which the renaissance wrote its finest poetry—the process, to cite *Timon,* whereby "thy great fortunes/ Are made thy chief afflictions."

Old topics perhaps, but as he sees it, the great antithesis at the heart of the Shakespearean action, of which all these lesser antitheses are but reflections, comes near to the bedrock of renaissance consciousness, a way of confronting the paradox of existence that was primarily "visual" and therefore inherently "dramatic"—making possible, among other things, the great plays. Mr. Fraser's method, therefore, is not "to study the influence of this on that," or to explicate *King Lear* as symbol, but to explicate the symbols behind the symbol, "to give as complete an account as I can of the Shakespearean experience" (p. xi). Thus the book is not really *about Lear.* If I may venture a figure, hopefully in the spirit of the book, it is not the flower which interests Mr. Fraser as much as the soil which nurtures it. Beyond the brief orientation of chapter one, you enter a garden of emblems, icons, images, and parables, supported by over fifty excellent plates (which make the volume well worth the price). These, as I say, are treated under seven general headings—polarizations you could call them—which Mr. Fraser assumes, with unruffled confidence, the reader will absorb into a sort of graphic *gestalt* of the "experience" Shakespeare was heir to.

[2] SHAKESPEARE'S POETICS IN RELATION TO *KING LEAR,* by *Russell A. Fraser.* Vanderbilt University Press. $5.00.

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It is a strange and demanding, though never dull, communion he asks of the reader. Typically, quotations from a dozen sources (almost nothing from criticism) will appear on a single page, welded together by a commentary that is often difficult to distinguish from the sources themselves, so aphoristic, and at times bewilderingly telegraphic, is Mr. Fraser's prose. Here is an example:

> Ignorance is not bliss, but the courting of disaster. To see the innocent flower but not the serpent beneath it is to go the way of King Duncan. To be the serpent and yet resemble the flower, is to go the way of Macbeth. (I.5.66f.) The king and the murderer fall equally from ignorance. Each is the gull of appearances. (p. 107)

This is a minor matter, once one has the rhythm of the book. So skillfully does Mr. Fraser harness his lore that you come to the closing chapter on "Shakespeare's Poetics," the longest and best, with the same anticipations you bring to the dénouement of a detective novel. It would seriously damage the thesis to enter an extract of it in the space allotted here. Shakespeare being what he is, some, I imagine, will be outraged at the abandon with which Mr. Fraser throws the comedies in with the tragedies in an attempt to reduce his principle of Misapprehension to its lowest common denominator. "Comic characters in Shakespeare," he says, "are, in curious ways, like the hero-villains of Shakespearean tragedy after they have made the tragic and irreversible choice, which means: when choice has been taken from them, when they have become heteronomous." Thus, Edmund (Mr. Fraser's favorite character), like Malvolio, or Dogberry, or Christopher Sly, "in a graver context, mistakes the satisfying of the ego for the root and sole motive of conduct" and "the revenging gods bend their thunders against him." This is cited not by way of criticism but to show something of Mr. Fraser's ceaseless search for correspondences, even beyond the well-respected genre borders.

My main disappointment is in his conception of *Poetics* as Shakespeare's "understanding of the relation between conduct and its consequences" (p. 140). He is not, therefore, much interested in aesthetic form but in the moral consciousness beneath it. This seems a pity because Mr. Fraser's intuition is highly visual and he has a nice feeling for Shakespeare's *habit of working*, for the strategy underlying the words, which in these closing pages approaches that "middle distance," as Northrop Frye calls it, from which the critic begins to see the plays not simply as studies in the psychology of individual heroes, to be examined one at a time, but as structures which spring from the same imagination, or, to use Mr. Frye's better analogy, as "simultaneous chess games played by a master who wins them all by devices familiar to him." Such a bent of mind is rather rare, I think, and deserves a more complete concept of poetics—one which might succeed in fusing this somewhat too persistent question of Shakespeare's moral inheritance with the knottier problems of craftsmanship.

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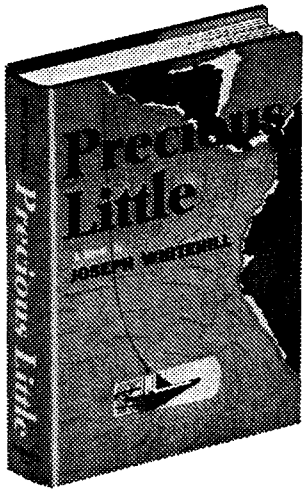

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